PREFACE.

Nearly half a century has elapsed since the Crown overtly assumed the government of India; it is thirty years since the lingering spirit of the East India Company flitted—almost unmarked—from the City. The earlier history of this great body has since been so powerfully illumined, the doings of its servants in the later period have been made such familiar themes, that it is somewhat remarkable the full story from birth to burial should never have been attempted in a popular form. Consider what abundance of histories, treaties, essays and monographs dealing with British India there are! Yet, speaking generally, in all these shelvesfull of Anglo-Indian literature there stands scarce one book in which the Company has not been treated as a side-issue—subordinated to its transmarine servants.

When one bears in mind that Jehan Kompani was never in India, that he was a purely English magnate, with a throne, council chamber and exchequer, not at Surat or Calcutta but in Leadenhall Street, the task of tracing a career of two and three-quarters centuries within the compass of one book can hardly be deemed supererogatory. To assume that a history of British India can ever consistently be made

to serve as a history of the East India Company is like supposing that the history of the wars and foreign relations of the British Empire from 1760 to 1820 will serve us for a biography of George III. The Company's identity is largely obscured by the exploits of Clive, and Hastings, and Wellesley, who very often *disobeyed* their master, and acted on their own initiative without any reference to the policy and prejudices of Leadenhall Street. In which disobedient conduct, however striking and romantic, there is little or nothing of what (borrowing the phrase from Adam Smith) I may call the Ledger aspect: too much, withal, of the Sword.

As for India, it was but a portion of the field worked by the Company. Its operations in Persia, China, in the far East, in the Red Sea, in St. Helena, are interesting and even vital, but we should not look for a narration of them in a history of India. Such an episode as the Boston Tea Party of 1773, and its connection with the Company, might well be, although it is not, in all the English and American popular histories; but how unreasonable it would be to expect to find it in Mill, Thornton, Gleig, and Malcolm!

The idea of this book was quite naturally suggested by the favourable reception given to my history of the Hudson's Bay Company. Disclaiming any peculiar fitness or authority, I have been content to find my material amongst the very numerous volumes, pamphlets and State papers, all readily accessible, where the story lay buried. Upon the ponderous and exhaustive *Annals* of John Bruce I have drawn

freely; as also upon the *British Power in India* of Peter Auber, long the Company's Secretary. Other works which have most helped me are Mr. Noel Sainsbury's *Calendar of State Papers:* East Indies Series; the writings of Sir W. W. Hunter, Mr. F. C. Danvers, and that venerable lover of India and her eloquent interpreter to us all, Sir George Birdwood; Malcolm's *British Power*, the histories of Gleig and MacFarlane, Wheeler's *Early Records*, Wilson's *English in Bengal*, and Hedges' Diary as edited by Colonel Yule. To Mr. William Foster, of the India Office, whose knowledge of Anglo-Indian records is, like Mr. Weller's knowledge of London, "extensive and peculiar," I am under much personal obligation.

It would not astonish me to learn, in spite of all my research, that there have been civil servants distinguished in literature, and in other walks of life besides those I have enumerated in the chapter on "The Muse in Leadenhall Street". Perhaps, also, some further biographical knowledge concerning the Company's great Chairman, Laurence Sulivan (1711?-1786), may be forthcoming from sources at present obscure, but known to some of my readers.

With regard to the orthography of Indian names, the question was whether to adopt the style of the Peninsular and Oriental Steamship Company, or of the *Imperial Gazetteer*. My choice may, perhaps, elicit the passing scorn of the Orientalists, even though I have weakly attempted to propitiate them by the reluctant sacrifice of "Nabob"—especially odious, it is said, to the race of innovators. I take

solace in the reflection that, despite its being replaced by "Nawáb" in these pages, the world will not willingly let "Nabob" die. But Kalkata for Calcutta, Marathá for Mahratta, Mughal for Mogul, fárman for firman, one finds it difficult to entertain. When our literature has sanctified a form, it should not lightly be abandoned, except for the weightiest of reasons. As Gibbon says of Amurath: "Murad or Morad may be correct; but I have preferred the popular name to that obscure diligence which is rarely successful in translating an Oriental into the Roman alphabet".[1]

It were absurd to expect that all or even that many of my conclusions will meet with universal approval, particularly the account of the period of Dutch rivalry in the seventeenth century, and the exposition of the real character and motives of Leadenhall Street in the century following. But at least my deductions are made from the facts as I have seen them, without, I think, any of that intermediary perversion due to national prejudice, or to an avowed admiration for the Old Company, of which I am not ashamed, even though it have led me to expose the faults of many of its most illustrious—and least obedient—servants.

CHOBHAM, SURREY,
May, 1903.

[1] *Decline and Fall*, chap. lxvii., note.

CONTENTS.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

CHAPTER I.

The Elizabethan Prologue.

In September, 1588, two months after the "Invincible Armada" was struck to pieces, a Suffolk country gentleman, gaunt and weather-beaten from two years of perilous faring in many climes, disembarked with his companions from their cockleshell of a pinnace and strolled up the High Street of Plymouth. The hearts of all were full of rejoicing at the tidings which had reached them while yet off the Lizard, despite a natural regret that they had had no share in the glory of Howard and Drake, Hawkins and Frobisher, in the great sea-duel with the Spaniard. Yet this home-coming Thomas Cavendish himself had a story to unfold worthy to kindle afresh the jubilation of his countrymen at the national triumph.[1]

Even to-day not without a Homeric charm, to sixteenth century ears Cavendish's narrative was

[1] "Cavendish took to piracy as a means to recover his squandered patrimony, like many other noblemen and gentlemen of the peerage."—*Dict. National Biog.* He had set sail in July, 1586, with three small ships of 140, 60 and 40 tons respectively, with crews aggregating 133 men. "Pillaging, prize-taking and burning to the water's edge, he raided up the Pacific Coast of Spanish America, buccaneered through the Spanish islands of the Indian Ocean, and finally returned by the Cape of Good Hope to be sung in ballads and flattered by the Court."—Hunter, *A History of British India.*

laden not only with the mystery of unknown lands and unknown seas, but with the magic of a mighty promise. As told first to the gaping squires, burghers, yeomen, fisherfolk and mariners, foregathered in the White Hart Inn at Plymouth that September day, and later to his sovereign lady, Elizabeth, and the merchants of London, it had the effect of arousing England anew to the advantages of a lucrative commerce with India, China and the Spice Islands of the East. It bade English merchants desist, in tones far louder than had ever yet been heard—louder even than those of the daredevil Drake—from all costly and fruitless attempts to reach the famed Indies by the frozen North-East and ice-bound North-West, or by any other marine pathway than by that invisible one wrought by the keels of ten thousand Spanish-Portuguese galleons, as they went forth laden with Peruvian ingots and returned bearing cargoes of spices, silks and jewels into the then opulent seaports of the Peninsula.

For Drake's circumnavigation of the globe—the first by any Englishman—audacious as it was, yet pointed to little from which the merchants of England could hope securely to profit. It exercised no effect upon their commercial schemes. The strength of Spain was, in 1580, still held in awe : Elizabeth was reluctant to infringe the vested rights which Philip II. enjoyed under the Pope's decree of a century before.[1]

[1] To distinguish clearly the possessions of Spain and Portugal, Alexander VI., by a Bull dated 4th May, 1493, drew a line over the ocean from the Arctic to the Antarctic Pole, which passed through a spot one hundred leagues westward of the Azores. All the

True, the "heretick Henry's" daughter had already spoken scornfully to her courtiers of "the donation of the Bishop of Rome to his favourites," but she had not yet pronounced that what was lawful for Spaniards was lawful also for Englishmen, "since the sea and air are common to all men". Doubts, then, on the part of the monarch, doubts never, perhaps, quite dispelled; fear, too, of Philip's "invincible" navy, sufficed to keep English merchants and merchantmen out of the Indian seas for some years after their leading spirits had begun openly to challenge the Spanish and Portuguese pretensions.[1]

But when Cavendish came back the national temper was wholly altered; the marine forces of Spain, so long dreaded, had fallen upon us. But they had not crushed us; we were not humbled in the dust. And the triumph coincided with a critical moment in England's commerce. Our merchants and workers were feeling stifled for want of a trade outlet. In our ports and harbours, along the banks of the Thames from London Bridge to Tilbury, lay such ships as we then could boast, their owners and masters chafing under the triple barrier which Papal policy, jealousy of the Grand Turk and the mean ra-

countries about to be, or which had been, discovered to the east of this line belonged to Spain, those to the west to Portugal.—See Weare's *Cabot's Discovery of North America* for a full copy of the Bull.

[1] For instance, in 1580, the very year of the union of the Spanish and Portuguese crowns, a number of London traders had petitioned the Privy Council for the Queen's consent to an expedition direct to the Indies. It was refused. A year later the Dutch made a similar request to their rulers, with similar result.

pacity of Philip II. of Spain had set up to obstruct the traffic of England with Eastern lands.

Moreover, no colonies Elizabeth then ruled; not even dominion had she over the northern half of Britain. Expansion, craved by the growing energies of the realm, was perforce restricted to trade. Instead of scouring the world's seven seas unhampered and by God-given right, as they do to-day, English merchants sent ships only to Amsterdam and a few to Levantine ports. From the hands of Dutch and German middlemen we obtained the fragrant products of the Spice Islands and Malabar, the cloths of Benares, the silks of Persia and the jewels of Golconda. When Antwerp was ruthlessly destroyed by Philip in 1586, Antwerp merchants came by scores and hundreds to settle in London. Our country looms were busy, as were our country forges, while heaped high on our metropolitan shop-counters lay the unsold wares. Action was necessary for the commercial health of England, and the time was ripe for action.

On the very day of his landing at Plymouth Thomas Cavendish demanded of mine host of the White Hart pen, ink and paper, and ensconcing himself in a retired corner of the hostelry—not so retired, we may have leave to think, but that his literary labours were regarded by the White Hart's frequenters with a mixture of awe and curiosity—he proceeded to indite to Lord Hunsdon, the Lord Chamberlain, and his friend at Court, an account of what befell him on his voyage, not forgetting to add that which he devoutly hoped would accrue from it.

"I navigated," he wrote, "to y^e^ islands of y^e^

Philippinos, hard upon y^e coast of China, of which countrie I have brought such intelligence as hath not been heard of in these partes ; a country, y^e stateliness and richness of which I fear to report lest I should not be credited. I sailed along y^e islands of y^e Moluccas, where, among some of y^e heathen people, I was well entreated, and where our countrymen may have trade as freely as y^e Portugals if they themselves will."[1]

Eager that his hint should be taken, Cavendish allowed the worthy burghers and adventurers of argosies to have the freest of access to him in London. He was often to be seen at the Royal Exchange and in the society of city men of substance. At their request he drew up a memorial embracing more fully that which he had seen and heard concerning the magnitude of the trade driven by Spaniards and Portuguese, and this was presented by the merchants to Elizabeth.

At first there was vacillation at Court ; perhaps there was also hesitation amongst some of the adventurers. The thing seemed so subversive of ancient policy that each doubtless shrank from risking too much of his gains upon an enterprise from which Englishmen had been traditionally debarred. It is easy to credit that the English then were, as their critics charge them with being now, a slow people, conservative and stiff to move in any direction involving a violent change of national practice, especially as regards trade, however specious appear the advantages to be derived. Then there was

[1] Calendar of State Papers.

the English hatred of imitation, which found voice in the oft-recurring wish, "Could we but find a north-west passage, we should have a way thither of our own". But the Queen did not withhold her consent, and the money was duly subscribed for the first English trading expedition to the Indies.

In April, 1591, the merchant adventurers of London sent their ships forth, under the general command of Captain George Raymond, one of Cavendish's favourites.[1] There were three vessels in this little fleet—the *Merchant Royal*, the *Penelope* and the *Edward Bonaventure*. Their departure created the greatest commotion, not merely throughout the mercantile community in London, but throughout five kingdoms. To the Spanish this business seemed a piece of almost incredible effrontery. Loud were the prognostications of evil in France. Even the Dutch thought the English had been somewhat too bold. Philip's ambassador, who had fled to Paris during hostilities, and his secretary, Iniquez, who remained behind to inform his master of the doings of the English, well knew, they said, how such an enterprise would end. Drake and Cavendish were all very well as pirates, but it was their opinion that the London merchants would be far better advised to remain content with procuring Eastern commodities through their friends in Amsterdam than to venture so far a-main on

[1] A few months later Cavendish himself, his "abundance of wealth" dissipated "in gallantry and following the Court," was induced to set sail for China, *viâ* Brazil, accompanied by John Davis of Arctic fame. The ships of the little fleet became separated, and off Ascension Isle Cavendish met his death and was buried at sea.

their own account. On the high seas they ran grave risks of drowning, hanging or being cut in twain by Spanish cutlasses. All the world knew, it was arrogantly said, "an Englishman's tender hide was as ill proof against the plague and scurvy as his stomach was against sea-sickness". Yet, while they indulged thus in foolish boasting, there is ample reason for thinking that Philip and the merchants of his realm viewed this expedition of the first London society of adventurers to India with profound misgivings, not less sincere because they cloaked them with satire.

Time did not hang heavily with the London merchants while waiting for news of their argosies. The interest which Drake's voyage had aroused, the solid hopes which Cavendish had stimulated, did not pause in idle expectancy for want of fuel. Everything relating to the East Indies was devoured on High 'Change with avidity. An aged country squire came up to stay for a time at that ancient hostelry, yclept the Elephant, bearing with him a written account of the Indies from his absent son. This son was Thomas Stevens,[1] the first Englishman resident in India of whom we possess any accurate knowledge.

Hopeless that the Roman Catholic religion would ever regain its ascendancy, Stevens had repaired to Rome, joined the Jesuits, and was, in 1579, ordered

[1] A graduate of New College, Oxford, 1579. Birdwood's *Report on the Old Records of the India Office.* Sir William Hunter reminds us of another Englishman, probably mythical, Sighelmus of Sherbourne, who is said to have made a pilgrimage to the tomb of St. Thomas, near Madras, in King Alfred's reign.

by the Superior of that body to settle at Goa. At this Indian capital, the chief Portuguese colony in the East, Stevens eventually became Rector of the Jesuits' College. His spiritual labours did not diminish his filial piety. He often wrote home, and his letters were full of that far-away land in which he abode. In one of his later epistles he narrated an unexpected meeting with one of the English nation, Ralph Fitch by name, who, with three fellow-travellers, had been arrested by the Portuguese authorities and flung into gaol at Goa.

This was the first news that had been heard in England of this same Master Fitch for many a day. In 1583 he had set out with three companions, Newbery, Leedes and Storey, to reach the Far East by the overland route. Elizabeth, ever ready to lend the light of her countenance to schemes of adventure, had supplied them with letters to those mysterious and semi-fabulous potentates, the King of Cambay and the Emperor of China. But eight years had passed and Fitch and his comrades had long been given up for lost, so that there was much rejoicing amongst Fitch's friends to hear that, though his liberty was in jeopardy, he still survived.

While the English monk's letters were going their rounds, and all were marvelling at the fate which had overtaken these Turkey Company emissaries to the Indies, word passed from mouth to mouth, at Court, on 'Change, at the guilds, in the taverns, at the Blackfriars Playhouse, where young William Shakespeare was then writing his first piece for the stage, that Ralph Fitch himself had returned to London.

Rumour spoke not falsely, and from Fitch's lips flew more testimony to East Indian commerce and affairs, adding to the rapidly increasing store of the merchants of London. Hard for us is it to realise in these days, when the earth and its races lie before our mind's eye almost as the lines in a man's hand, how scanty and oblique was such information, how mingled with fable and polluted with falsehood the stream of geographical knowledge in the sixteenth century. "The little world," says Sir Walter Besant, "had become almost suddenly very large, inconceivably large. The boys of London, playing about the river stairs and the quays, listened to the talk of men who had sailed along those newly discovered coasts of the new great world, and had seen strange monsters and wild people. In the taverns men—bearded, bronzed, scarred, grave men with deep eyes and low voices, who had sailed to the Guinea coast, round the Cape of Hindustan, across the Spanish Main, over the ocean to Virginia —sat and told youths, with flushed cheeks and panting eager breath, queer tales of danger and escape, between their cups of sack."

In truth, our forefathers then were not yet advanced beyond believing in "the Ethiopian with four eyes, the Arimaspi with one eye, the Hippopodes or Centaurs, the Monopoli or men who had no head, but carry their faces in their breasts and their eyes in their shoulders". But Fitch's story was not of these ; his was a true relation. He told how he and his friends had travelled along the valley of the Euphrates and Persian Gulf to Ormuz, at

which city, account of their presence having reached the ears of the ever watchful and suspicious Portuguese, all were made prisoners and sent manacled to Goa. Here, to his amazement, he was visited by an English monk, to whose influence he attributed his speedy release, for the monk stood high in the counsels of the Church, his pure and strong ardour shining brightly amidst all the degenerate influences surrounding him. He found employment for two of Fitch's companions, while a third rewarded their patron by joining the Jesuit fraternity. As for Fitch himself, however, he was not to be wheedled by priest or frightened by Portuguese viceroy into abandoning his travels; he went inland to the Mogul Court at Agra. After many wanderings in Burma and the East he returned to Goa, that showy but noisome retreat for official incompetence and knavery, of faded splendour, a very cesspool of physical iniquity. His second stay here was brief, and Fitch once more set foot on his native shores the year Raymond sailed away on the first English commercial adventure to the East Indies.[1]

As for that adventure, it was fated to be after all a victory for the prognosticators of evil. Raymond had left in April; with the ensuing July the largest

[1] Fitch afterwards wrote out his story, which was published by "the Company's historiographer," Richard Hakluyt.

In 1606 was produced Shakespeare's *Macbeth*; there we read (Act I., Scene iii.): "Her husband's to Aleppo gone, master of the *Tiger*." This line, when compared with the opening passage of Fitch's narrative, is too striking to be regarded as a mere coincidence, and is also one of the clearest pieces of evidence known to us of Shakespeare's use of the text of Hakluyt.—*Dictionary of National Biography*. See also *Ralph Fitch*, by J. Horton Ryley, 1899.

ship, the *Merchant Royal*, was back in the Thames. Her master unfolded a dire tale of distress. A virulent sickness had broken out amongst the crews of all three vessels, arising doubtless from the bad character of the provisions, a common experience with marine adventurers since the days of Columbus. It forced Raymond to put ashore at what is now Cape Town, where the stricken men were weeded out and sent back to England. To anticipate the career of the other two ships, the *Penelope* and the *Edward Bonaventure* struck out boldly for the Indies. A tempest arose; the crew of the first-named laboured valiantly to free her from its embraces, but their efforts were all in vain and the waters of the Indian Ocean closed over Raymond and his fellows.

The third ship of this unlucky fleet, under Captain James Lancaster, sailed on to its destined bourne, under stress of weather and in constant dread of hurricanes, scurvy, pirates and Portuguese, and having finally reached the Malay Peninsula, contrived probably at a sacrifice, to secure a cargo of pepper, cloves and cinnamon. On the return voyage, she had hardly rounded the terrible Cape of Good Hope than it seemed as if the real hardships of the crew were only just begun. Their numbers were thinned by drowning and disease. Strive as he would, Lancaster could not make headway against the fierce Atlantic gales; the *Edward Bonaventure* found herself swept athwart the sheer waste of waters to that locality in the New World where Columbus had landed a century before. From

Hispaniola to Labrador and from Labrador to Hispaniola she helplessly careered. At last Lancaster and his disheartened crew went ashore, leaving five men and a boy to guard the ship and her precious freight of pepper and spices. These well fulfilled their trust, for, in the absence of the "General" and his companions, a fresh storm arose, the cable parted and the *Edward Bonaventure*, with her slender complement, was driven out to sea. With gaping timbers, and nearly dismantled, she finally reached Plymouth; her cargo, such as it was, was half ruined. Lancaster himself was given a passage home by the good-natured master of a French barque and landed at Rye, just three years after he had set out under Raymond, having lost all but a score out of 198 men who were his fellow-voyagers in 1591.[1]

This first voyage of an English Company organised for trade with the Indies is as our first milestone on the long roadway of the present story. Its importance has been strangely obscured in the subsequent successes of the Dutch. But it left English shores full four years before Cornelius Van Houtman departed from Amsterdam and the Dutch merchant-adventurers first began those solid and splendid attempts to oust the Portuguese and make the chief commerce between Europe and Asia their own.

Is it to be thought insignificant that, ere any Dutchman had paid out a solitary guilder to establish a direct trade with the East, an English fleet of

[1] *The Voyages of Sir James Lancaster*, by Sir Clements Markham, 1877.

merchantmen, at the charge of a London company of merchants, had sailed forth for Malacca; and twelve months before Van Houtman's departure an English vessel had returned, after manifold vicissitudes, with her bags of spices to an English port? In brief, Lancaster's voyage, in the words of the latest historian of British India, "tore the Papal award into shreds"; it pointed the way to the Company's commercial conquests in the East.

But ere the issue could be known other interesting events had been happening. The Turkey Company, incorporated in 1581 for trade with the subjects of the Sultan, had procured an important expansion of its privileges from Elizabeth. Under a new charter the merchants were enabled to have traffic with India by land, under the style and title of the Governor and Company of the Merchants of the Levant.[1] Those who had put money into the marine adventure thought it well to have more than one string to their bow; they fancied they had provided against Raymond's failure by an overland monopoly. Nor is it by any means improbable that, had no obstacles appeared to diminish the value of the new patent from the Crown, the anxiety to trade by sea, which, in spite

[1] Mr. Henry Stevens states, in a volume of Court Records transcribed by him, that a number of letters were found in the MS. volume, which contained the first minutes of the East India Company, which were obviously drafts of Levant Company correspondence. Several persons mentioned were, we know, members of both companies, and the inference is that one company grew out of the other. Richard Staper was a leading member, if not the leading member, of both companies. It is not improbable that he witnessed Cavendish's return in 1588, for he is described as "of Plymouth and London".

of Raymond's fate, soon grew feverish, would not have been manifested for some years to come. For in her declining years, as her life and reign drew to a close, Elizabeth seemed less and less desirous to continue open conflict with Spain or to give offence to the Pope, albeit still less willing to give offence to her subjects by denying their reasonable requests.

But, as it chanced, the Levant Company became very quickly baulked in its schemes for building up an Indian trade *viâ* the Mediterranean. Nor was the Muscovy Company any whit more successful in achieving the same end by a northern route. In 1596 the London merchants combined with Sir Robert Dudley, Cavendish's brother-in-law, to fit out three ships with suitable cargoes. This expedition, destined for the Indies, was given in charge of Captain Benjamin Wood, who received from the Queen letters similar to those she had vouchsafed to Fitch and Newbery, who had, as we have seen, miserably failed to deliver them to their destined recipients, the Emperor of China and the Great Mogul. The hopeful merchants went down to the docks to bid Wood farewell; he waved his kerchief to them as he sailed away to the East Indies with their cloth, knives and bullion in quest of trade. And he was never seen by them again.

A couple of years afterwards a report reached London that Wood and his little fleet had given battle to a Portuguese treasure ship in the Gulf of Bengal, and with the blood-red cross of St. George flying had come off victorious. Hard upon this exploit the sailors had been attacked by fever,

perishing one after the other, until at last, when coming home by way of Cape Horn they were shipwrecked in the Spanish Main, but four were left. These four fell in on a small island with some rascally Spaniards, who murdered three of them in cold blood for such paltry treasure as they possessed. The survivor, escaping to relate the thrilling tale of his adventures to a Cuban alcalde, fell a miserable victim to a dose of poison.

This, then, was the eve of the formal inception of the East India Company, fated to be the richest, the most romantic, the most colossal private commercial, military and governing body that ever flourished, or now ever can flourish, on earth. The London merchants were deeply dispirited. Twice, as we have seen, had they attempted to plant their standard of trade in the Indies, and twice had they been wretchedly foiled. For a century had the bold spirits of the guilds watched enviously from afar the successful inroads of the Portuguese to the East and the Spanish to the West, the passage and repassage of their fantastically rigged carracks and galleons, crammed to the very water-line and reeling drunkenly with excess of treasure. Long had they stood idly by—in the Royal Exchange, in Goldsmith's Hall, in the halls of the Mercers, the Clothworkers, the Cutlers and the Founders—chafing at the unfair restraint imposed upon English trade by the course of international politics, hoping for the day when the false and arbitrary barrier should be battered down and the pathway to the Indies and the ports there be as free to Englishmen as was

the highway from Stepney to the mouth of the Thames.

In 1588 the barrier was beaten down at last, and a decade later the exciting race for the Indian trade began in earnest. The Spaniards and the Portuguese saw their monopoly assailed and gradually begin to melt away like mists before a tropical sun. But to the mortification of England it was not her own merchants, but another set of men whose laden ships sprang into the Atlantic highway, who, flouting the Pope of Rome and his Bulls—the feeble Philip and his armadas, struck out for Sumatra, Java and the Moluccas, and returned rich and boastful.

Verily, while we rubbed our eyes, our fellow-Protestants, the Dutch, a lumbering race, but yesterday vassals to the Spaniard and only awakened from sleep in his wars, had made a high and daring bid for the commerce of the East.

Between 1595 and 1599 eight or ten squadrons sailed away from Flanders bound for the Spice Islands. Some went by way of the Cape of Good Hope, others by the Straits of Magellan; every proper barque or pinnace was put into requisition. The Dutch shipwrights laboured diligently, but the demand was far greater than the supply; and the merchant adventurers of Amsterdam and Rotterdam at last had no more ships to send. Yet even the spectacle of so much zeal would not suffice; it seemed at this moment as if nothing would stir our disheartened London merchants to emulate the example of their Flemish neighbours.

Had they indeed sickened of such speculation?

Were they satisfied that the greatly extolled advantages of a direct maritime trade with the East Indies were, taking one year with another, more than counterbalanced by the risks of total loss? Were we fain to yield the commerce to the Dutch without a struggle?

For the moment it may well have seemed so to contemporary observers, to the publicists, like luckless Francis Bacon, then studying profoundly the signs of the times from the interior of a spunging-house in Coleman Street, to the gossips, the tradesmen, the clerics, like William Harrison, the wits, to which latter category belonged William Shakespeare, who had just penned, from his Thames-side lodgings, that appeal to his countrymen—

> Naught shall make us rue,
> If England to itself do rest but true.

Repeated failure had led the merchants of London to give up the battle for the prize of the Indies; such was the conclusion drawn by many. But who read thus were deceived. They did not reck of the quenchless spirit of indomitability that burned in the bosoms of the freemen of the ancient guilds. What seemed like a permanent withdrawal was in reality but a momentary hesitation. The merchants who were most closely concerned, particularly those who had been responsible for the formation of the Levant Company, were temporarily unconvinced that success by the overland route was impracticable. Disillusion dawned at last, and with it a fixed determination to procure from the Queen a royal patent to trade by the Cape route to India.

CHAPTER II.

A Birth in Founder's Hall.

Of any diplomatic difficulties which were then threatening at Court, the band of active spirits amongst the merchants of London, who, early in 1599, informally met for the purpose of considering the project for a new Company for trade to the Indies, guessed nothing. The moment seemed propitious, and they were chiefly bent upon drawing up a memorial to the Queen in Council, showing why they should have the full royal sanction to trade, and be granted a patent of monopoly.

At a meeting in April the first practical step was made. One of those assembled, John Mildenhall, offered to start at once overland for the Court of the Grand Mogul, and there negotiate a treaty with his Indian majesty against the arrival of the chartered adventurers by sea. This was far to outstrip the Dutch in enterprise. For as yet the Dutch had no trade with the people of the mainland, but only with certain of the Spice Islands, such as Java, Sumatra and the Moluccas; while as for the once mighty commerce of the Portuguese, for two or three decades past it had been sunk in inertia and dwindled helplessly.

The enterprising Mildenhall's offer was accepted; he was engaged and furnished forth with money for his travels. Elizabeth herself received this first

scout and pioneer of the East India Company at Court, just prior to his departure, and graciously provided him with a letter to the Emperor Akbar, such as Her Majesty had previously entrusted to other adventurers. Thus equipped and inspirited, Mildenhall departed on what proved in the sequel to be a romantic but fruitless mission.

The merchants, so long dilatory, now got briskly to business. An association was formed and a contract drawn up. The latter, still extant, is deeply interesting as the first authentic deed which occurs in the annals of direct maritime trade between England and India. Its character and contents are sufficiently indicated in its opening sentence:—

"The names of suche persons as have written with there owne hands to venter in the pretended voiage to the East Indies (the whiche it maie please the Lorde to prosper) and the somes that they will adventure; the xxij September, 1599."[1]

A few weeks before this the Dutch had sent a message to their English neighbours telling them they sorely lacked ships for the new Indian trade, and offering to buy or charter some of those lying in the Thames.

The reply vouchsafed to the Amsterdam agents, waiting at the Old Steelyard of the Hamburg Com-

[1] A faithful transcript of the Company's first Court Book was published in 1886 by the late Henry Stevens, of Vermont, with an introduction by Sir George Birdwood. The above forms the first entry; the last records a committee meeting, 28th June, 1603. "Within those four years is contained the germ of every triumph subsequently achieved in the seas and lands of the East."—See *The Dawn of British Trade to the East.*

pany to commence negotiations for English shipping, was of no uncertain tenor :—

"Our merchants of London have need of all our ships and have none to sell to the Dutch. We ourselves intend forthwith to have trade with the East Indies." And to follow up words with deeds, the merchants instantly subscribed a sum of £30,133 6s. 8d., divided into numerous shares or adventures, the subscriptions of individuals varying from £100 to £3,000, large sums in those days. Wherefore the Dutch agents were fain to return to their superiors empty-handed to give warning that this time the London merchants were in earnest, that these new efforts called upon the Flemish adventurers to push forward strenuously towards the expansion and monopoly of the trade which Van Houtman, acting upon English example, had founded four years before.

The merchants were not in error; the moment was indeed propitious; the recent upgrowth of English trade and shipping was astonishing. At the beginning of Elizabeth's reign London boasted altogether only 317 merchants, of whom 96 were members of the Mercers' Company. It was then "impossible for the City to raise a loan of £10,000," whereas now London was advancing to the Queen loans of £60,000. Then as to shipping, Froude states that in 1572 the burden of all vessels engaged in ordinary commerce in the kingdom barely exceeded 50,000 tons. The largest sailing vessels from London were of about 250 tons burden. Even in 1588 there were but two or three in the kingdom of

400 tons. Now there were many of 600 and 800 tons burden, and in a few brief years the East India adventurers were to launch one of 1,100 tons for the India trade.

Nor was this all that told in our favour; the Hanseatic merchants had just been ordered to quit England, and the English merchants in the Hanse towns came back home to put fresh life into the export trade. Our buyers and sellers had long looked with jealous eyes upon the intruding Hansards, as they were called, and finally, in 1597, Elizabeth commanded the agents of this powerful league of Continental traders to quit their premises at the Steelyard within fourteen days.[1]

The new body of merchant adventurers sought a formal charter, because without such charter all trade —foreign or domestic, all craftsmanship even—was held unlawful. Everything but the air was hedged about; the regulated companies were only a development of the town guilds adapted for the purpose of foreign trade. "In the regulated companies," says a recent writer, "at that time chiefly represented by the *Russia*, the *Turkey* and the *Eastland*, every member or 'freeman' traded solely on his own ac-

[1] The story of this chief of European trading guilds is, as Mr. Horton Ryley reminds us, a veritable romance of commerce. It "negotiated with monarchs and threatened princes". Its chief depot in England was long situate where the Cannon Street railway station now stands, known then as the Steelyard, whereon once stood the great balance of the City, on which all imported and exported merchandise had to be officially weighed. After their expulsion the property remained in the hands of the representatives of the Hansards until 1853, when a syndicate purchased it for the sum of £72,000.

count, subject only to the regulations of the association. In fact, they may be regarded as growing out of the trade guilds, modified to meet the requirements of their more enlarged sphere of action. In the guilds each member purchased a licence to ply his trade in his own district at his personal risk, the guild itself being irresponsible for his liabilities in case of failure. On the other hand, he enjoyed all the advantages of membership in an incorporated trade which could not be exercised by outsiders, even though residents in the district. In the same way no subject of the Crown could trade in any foreign district, where a regulated company was established, without first acquiring membership by the payment of a fee.

"Even in the earliest of these chartered bodies the principle of apprenticeship was enforced, so that, as in the guilds, he who served his time to a member acquired *ipso facto* the privilege of membership; or, if a fine was exacted, it was either nominal or of much less amount than that imposed on outsiders. The fines exacted helped towards the general working expenses of the Company, including the support of consuls in the foreign ports where they enjoyed exclusive rights." [1]

A patent of monopoly once secured from the Sovereign, and the Turkey Company, alone of the subjects of the realm, might exchange goods with the merchants of Aleppo and Constantinople, and the Muscovy Company enjoy alone the trade with the dealers of Astrakhan and Bokhara in perpetuity,

[1] Cawston and Keane: *The Early Chartered Companies*.

or as long as the terms of the charter provided for. Woe to the hardy or envious ones who should seek to invade that monopoly. Free trade was a proposition unheard of, and interlopers were branded as desperate criminals. It would fare worse with them if such were met on the high seas by the chartered adventurers than if they had been Caspian corsairs or Tartars of the Volga on the one hand, or Spanish buccaneers and Barbary freebooters on the other. With these one could compound in dire straits, but there was no idle parleying when the "pirates" chanced to be compatriots. The great difficulty generally experienced by the merchants in procuring a patent, which would grant them and no other the sole right to traffic with men of this or that nation, made the privilege valuable. In the case of the present society of adventurers, who desired to have an exclusive commerce with India at the moment when the memorable sixteenth century was drawing to a close, the difficulties commonly met with by charter-hunters at Court threatened to be unusually formidable.

Long ere the dreary negotiations between the London merchants and the Court officials were terminated, months before that series of depressing interludes in ante-chambers at Whitehall, Windsor and Hampton Court came to an end, the hearts of the merchants often sank within them, and they are little to be blamed if they began to regard the long-wished-for Anglo-Indian commerce, based on sure foundations, as fated never to be in the old Queen's time.

These men were burghers; they belonged to the

middle class of men. Not one of their number could write "gentleman" after his name, although a few amongst them had had the civic dignity of knighthood bestowed upon them. Three or four, indeed, had "passed the chair" and held office as Lord Mayor of London. They were, as one may see by their portraits, of a stalwart stock; a dogged pertinacity in whatever they undertook was the quality which distinguished them. Nor is it hard to picture now this body at the moment of its first formal meeting in Founder's Hall, 24th September, 1599.[1]

The light of the many-mullioned windows descends upon the rugged faces of the fourscore citizens, who, fronted by the portly Lord Mayor, Sir Stephen Soame, deliberate as gravely as their restless hopes will permit on the precise form the new society shall take. Some amongst them—the leaders—were grown veterans in that especial project. Such was Richard Staper, who with his friend, Thomas Smythe, years before had been a principal founder of the Levant Company, when his plan was described in the royal patent as one whereby "many good offices may be done for the peace of Chris-

[1] The Founders' Company in 1531 purchased "two Houses and a Garden to build theyre Hall". The garden belonged to the ancient monastery of St. Austin, the church of which still remains. The site of the hall was close to the corner of Lothbury and Moorgate Street, now occupied by a telegraph company. Under date of 1604 I find the following entry in the Founders' books: "Recd of the East India Merchaunts for two Yeares Rent . . . viij l," showing that the Company continued to hold their chief meetings there. The hall was destroyed by the great fire of 1666, but the site is still owned by the Founders, whose habitat is now in St. Swithin's Lane.

tendom, relief of Christian slaves and good vent for the commodities of this realm". A monument to Staper may to-day be seen in the quaint church of St. Helen's in Bishopsgate Street ("the Company's church"), in which he is boldly denominated "the chiefest actor in the discovere of the trades of Turkey and East India".

There were also to be seen in the front row of benches, Sir John Hart, Alderman Halliday, Alderman Bayning, Richard Cockayne and John Eldred,[1] very props and pillars of the City.[2]

But not all in this assemblage, which deserves to be memorable, were merchants. Mingled with the bluff knights, the aldermen and freemen of the London guilds, were a crew of unruffed fellows of a different mien and in some instances of a different origin. Sailors or soldiers, one would say, from their grim, weather-beaten cheeks and bearded throats; far travellers, too, from the almost fantastic variety of their habit, the outlandish shape and colour of their doublets, the odd gold rings in their ears, the chains about their necks, each terminating in a

[1] John Eldred in 1588 returned from Tripoli and Aleppo in the *Hercules* of London, which was the richest ship of English merchants' goods that ever was known to come into this realm.—*Purchas his Pilgrimes*. In *The Dawn of British Trade* we are only given the list of those who actually subscribed.

[2] "When," observes Sir George Birdwood, "the British South Africa Company assembled in the City to hear Mr. Rhodes expatiate on their position and prospects, we were told there was something very Elizabethan in the meeting. Save in coats, hats and umbrellas, the scene was said to be identical with that presented at the preliminary meetings of the East India Company in the sixteenth century."—Introduction, *First Letter Book*.

curious amulet, the short foreign blades spitted at their waists. Foremost in this picturesque group were Lancaster and John Davis and Francis Pretty, the bosom friend of Cavendish. There was a corporal's guard of Drake's men, passionately devoted to the memory of their brave leader; a few who had been with Hawkins; there were Ralph Fitch, William Pers, William Baffin,[1] the Middletons and other notable sea-dogs. These had with their own eyes beheld the Indies and had sailed the far-famed Indian Ocean. They were familiar with the sight of Spanish and Portuguese carracks loaded with treasure and costly spices, and more than once had assisted to despoil these same carracks of their fragrant burden. Such men well knew what English pluck and English enterprise could lay hold of in the East, and they were not easily restrained from giving their evidence. One by one they stood naïvely and fearlessly up in the hall of the Founders and egged the far from hesitating merchants on by a recital, accompanied by uncouth phrase and gesture, of what was to be had by our English nation in the Indies. Little thought was in their minds of what the Dutch were doing; no fear of Dutch rivalry. They had little

[1] William Baffin was for some time in the service of the East India Company and visited several parts of the East Indies, having made two voyages under Captain Andrew Shilling. He took part in the siege of Ormuz, where he was mortally wounded, in January, 1622. Purchas tells us "he received a shot from the Castle into his belly, wherewith he gave three leaps and died immediately". His widow, being in years and deaf, made an unequal choice for her second husband, a man "not of the best governed," but the East India Company promised "so to work with her husband that some honest means may be allotted her out of Baffin's estate".

desire to imitate Dutch methods of trade. They doubtless told the merchants that the subjects of all other nations were called "pirates" in those Oriental seas by the Spaniards and Portuguese. Whenever a Dutch or English, French or German galley, barque or merchantman passed a Spaniard on the high seas, even if one fishing smack encountered another, if they did not discharge a murderous broadside they were pretty sure to exchange a volley of insulting epithets. The Spaniard called the Englishman or Fleming "pirate" for his hardihood in venturing his craft upon waters decreed to the mariners of another race by the Holy Father at Rome, who was well known by every orthodox Catholic to have the entire universe in his gift. And this taunt of "pirate" stuck almost to our own day, through all the melancholy stages in which the Portuguese grasp loosened on the trade of the East Indies.[1]

But this claim of the subjects of Philip to the exclusive commerce with India and adjacent parts, based on the Papal Bull of 1491, was too sweeping, too indefinite to commend itself to the growing enlightenment and common sense of the times. It was, for instance, already an axiom in international law that any nation could only lay claim to such heathen countries or uninhabited regions as they had settled, or fortified, or wherein they had erected some visible symbol of possession. Fitch, Lancaster and the mariners of Drake and Hawkins well knew how

[1] "Even the British sovereigns," remarks Sir William Hunter, "which long formed the chief gold currency of Portugal, were popularly known as 'pirates'."

little of the vast teeming East had been explored and exploited by the Iberian monarchs and their adventurous vassals. For almost a century they had clung to the mere outskirts of the Mogul Empire at Goa, Diu and the like, and was not the valiant Fitch there to tell the Londoners what a vile sink of depravity, of mercantile stagnation, of official incompetence and corruption Goa, surnamed "Dourado," had become?

Put all the Spanish-Portuguese ports and trading stations in the whole East together, from Mozambique to Manila, and they would foot up barely a score. What, then, of Madagascar, of Bengal, of Siam, of Cambodia, Borneo, New Guinea, of Corea and the Coromandel coast, of Japan and "the mightie and welthy Empire of China itself?" And in the "riche and innumerable islands of the Molucos and the Spiceries," the Portuguese had but two small forts, at Tidore and Amboyna.

Their course of action lay clear enough, and the merchants of London assembled on that September day, confident that their monarch would not deny them the boon they so ardently sought, passed unanimously a resolution to apply to Her Majesty for her gracious assent to a project "intended for the honour of their native country and the advancement of trade and merchandise within the realm of England; and to set forth a voyage this year to the East Indies and other islands and countries thereabouts". This description proves that the project was general and designed for opening a trade at any of the ports in the East at which it might be practicable to sell

European and purchase Indian produce. The extreme precision with which the first general regulations were drawn is proof also that the project had already been matured, and was intended to be carried into immediate execution.

But the work of the meeting did not halt there. The first practical step was to seek to prevent the funds, which two days before had been subscribed, from being contributed by the merchants in any other form than ready money. No ship or cargo, for instance, was to be received in lieu of cash. The character of the new Company had already been planned by Staper and his friends on the lines of the Levant Company, of which, as we have seen, he was principal founder. Indeed, the Turkey trade just now languished; most, if not all, the Levant members were concerned in the new society. As evincing the spirit of frugality which animated the merchants, we may recall that one of the Levant Company's account books, which for some time past had, owing to the tyranny and rapacity of Turk and Spaniard, been innocent of entries, was pressed into the service of the new Company.[1] The direct management of the Company was

[1] The first letter-book and register of the Company lay in obscurity for nearly three centuries, and although consulted by Messrs. Rundall & Corney in their Hakluyt Society treatises about 1850, disappeared until 1884. It was not consulted by Sainsbury in his *State Calendars of the Records of the Indian Office*, nor by Birdwood in his *Report on the Old Records* in 1879, the former observing, "this register is missing". It is of the utmost value in shedding light on the Company's early transactions up to 1619, including the period presumably covered by the missing Court Minutes for 1603-06 and 1610-14. The volume was reproduced and edited by Birdwood and Foster in 1893.

entrusted to the fifteen committeemen or directors, who were appointed to prepare and regulate the prospective voyage. At the initial meeting, moreover, it was decreed that in future an adventurer's share would stand at £200, and that a call should be made of 12 per cent. on each share, to be utilised as a fund in hand and applied to the purchase and outfit of ships for the voyage.

At a late hour the members of the newly born society separated. Home went many to their gabled dwellings in Stepney or Shoreditch, Wapping or Lincoln's Inn Fields, perchance to the suburban villages of Islington and Charing Cross, for not all these substantial burghers affected the very purlieus of 'Change, to relate to their wives and households what thing had been done that day in the hall of the Founders. Who was to whisper to them, what fancy so extravagant to foresee, the coming magnitude of the seed they had sown? It is not credible that any could have guessed of what greatness they themselves were the beginners and forerunners; that the body which they had just compacted was to endure for more than two centuries and a half, was to become an Oriental sovereign with absolute dominion over 200,000,000 of people, that it was to attain to an opulence unmatched in the history of Europe, to exert a rule unequalled since the days of the Cæsars; that their successors and descendants, masters of an invulnerable army, were from a London counting-house to replace the glittering musnuds of the East. Staper and his friends were sanguine, but they were

not seers; there was none to hint to them of such a destiny.

On the day following the directors met. They divided themselves into two separate committees, one of which was charged with the task of conducting through all its stages the formal application to the Lords of the Privy Council for a grant of the required privileges. To the other was allotted the duty of providing shipping and buying cargoes for the forthcoming expedition.

Although, as has been shown, the English and not the Hollanders were the pioneers in defiance of the Papal decree, yet it was deemed eminently politic to throw the burden of infringement of a law which had been recognised by Europe for a century upon the merchant adventurers of the Netherlands. By thus mentioning the recent success of Van Houtman and his compeers in trading to the Spice Islands, there would be added an especial reason for the English having a share in that commerce as well as for haste in granting the privileges by the Court.

Queen Elizabeth made no secret of the fact that she was on the side of the merchants. As for the Privy Council, they received the petition with outward favour and an inward resolve to oppose at all hazard the request of the new Company. Delicate negotiations were just commencing with Spain; if the Queen were to give her sanction to this violation of the Papal award Philip would take mortal umbrage. The war with Spain had dragged along for many years; the nation and Court were sick of it. Elizabeth's health was failing, and in her religious moments

she was eager for a reconciliation with her Catholic arch-enemy. But such a step must not cost her too much ; she was not prepared to sacrifice the affection of her burghers ; in the meantime Burleigh, Walsingham and the others must suffer the brunt of the negotiations with Philip.

The committee of the new Company waited on the Queen on the 16th of October. She applauded the project, and signified her assent to the proposition they had broached. The merchants were instructed to endeavour to obtain from the Privy Council a warrant to proceed on the voyage, and a permit to carry out of the realm five thousand pounds weight of bullion, as a stock for the contemplated trade. They were likewise graciously instructed to attempt to procure a draft of privileges, which, upon a subsequent occasion, Her Majesty would peruse, and, if possible, consent to. In such phrases did Elizabeth seek to gain time and conceal her dilemma. But the merchant adventurers, knowing nothing of any predicament into which the Queen found herself thrust, were filled with joy at the cordial nature of their reception at Court. All to them augured well for their scheme. Treaties were begun for ships and stores, and it was confidently believed that the expedition would sail out of the Thames by the following spring.

But further disappointment was in store. When in due course they presented themselves before the Lords in Council they were abruptly informed that private interests must be accommodated to the state of public affairs. They were told of the impending

negotiations with the King of Spain and their bearing upon their request. The fathers of the East India Company listened in dismay; they had hardly any answer to make, they were so astounded. But they had this to ask among themselves:—

"Are we to make our merchants vassals to the Flemings? Will this vaunted friendship with Spain bring us in £100,000 a year?"

In vain the merchants pleaded to be allowed to embark upon the voyage, notwithstanding the treaty which was in progress. They but wasted their words. The Council was obdurate; and flattering themselves with the sympathy of the Queen, the merchant adventurers were fain at last to give in, fearing lest, as they themselves put it, "after they were drawn into a charg, they should be required to desist their viage," but—and here is a trait of that hopeful epoch!—"did enter into the preparaçon of a viage the next yeare followinge".

There was now plenty of time for the adventurers to look about themselves and present their case fully and with the completest foresight and knowledge. Their first expedition could not sail for another year; they resolved to leave nothing undone to ensure its sailing then. Spain's alleged privileges were at the root of the trouble blocking their designs; they would bend their energies to demolishing this absurd claim to an exclusive traffic with every race and country to be reached by sea in the East. Any recognition of the Spanish claim was based upon geographical ignorance; the Company consequently sought to dispel

that ignorance by laying bare before Elizabeth and her counsellors all that was then known, or could be ascertained from every available source of knowledge in Europe, of the countries, inhabitants and rulers of farther Asia.[1] Every nobleman's library was ransacked; the merchants consulted mariners and travellers, and took down their depositions; they borrowed maps and charts, and finally embodied the fruit of their researches in a memorial which is a landmark to-day of the historical and geographical knowledge of the wisest Englishmen at the close of the sixteenth century. The memorial, which was presented duly to the Lords of the Council, was entitled:—

"Certayne reasons, why the English Merchants may trade into the East Indies, especially to such rich kingdoms and dominions as are not subjecte to the Kinge of Spayne and Portugal; together with the true limits of the Portugals conquest and jurisdiction in these oriental parts."

"Let the Spaniards," said the English merchant adventurers, "shewe any juste and lawful reasons,

[1] It appears that Hakluyt was consulted by the Court of Directors of the East India Company from the very commencement of their operations, and by an order of the Court of the 16th February, 1601, certain warrants were ordered to be drawn, including one of 10*l.* to Mr. Hakluyt "for his travails, taken in instructions and advices touching the preparing of the voyage, and for his former advices in setting the voyage in hand the last year". Also "30s. for three maps by him provided and delivered to the Company". Hakluyt was appointed "historiographer of the East India Company," with custody of the MS. journals, all of the Company's voyages up to 1616, the year of his death. The journals passed then into the hands of the Rev. Samuel Purchas, who, having compiled his book, *Purchas: his Pilgrimes*, presumably destroyed them.

void of affection and partialitie, why they should barre her Majestie and al other Christian princes and states, of the use of the vaste, wyde and infinitely open ocean sea, and of access to the territories and dominions of so many free princes, kings and potentates in the East, in whose dominions they have noe more sovereign comaund or authoritie, than wee, or any Christians whatsoever."

Elizabeth herself examined this memorial with deep interest, and handing it to Sir Francis Walsingham, who was then about her person, desired him to ascertain if the contention of her London merchants was a sound one, if their assertions regarding the limited commerce of the Portuguese were based on facts. Walsingham, doubtless, thought he could not do better than to refer the document to the learned Fulke Greville, who proceeded to back up the arguments of the Company from his own literary stores and establishment, drawing freely, as he confessed, upon Osorius, Eden's *Decades*, "and espetially owt of the voyages of John Huighen (Linschoten)". He made it clear what kings were known to have commerce with the subjects of Philip, the deduction being irresistible that with any other potentates than those so recognised the new body was as free to traffic, without violating Spanish pretensions, as the Levant Company had been free to trade, so far as international law was concerned, with the Grand Turk.

Such an argument as the merchants propounded they felt to be unanswerable, save by a grant of all that they sought to obtain. A year had rolled by

when they again met in Founder's Hall on the 23rd September, 1600, and with it, as they deemed, all reasonable opposition to a patent of privileges from the Queen. In this sanguine mood it was agreed that they would "goe forwards with the voiage," entrusting the management of this business to seventeen committeemen or directors. The new court convened almost daily, so anxious were its members to get their argosies under weigh at the proper season, without having to incur any further disappointment. By their purchase for the sum of £1,600, on 25th September, of the ship *Susan*, the first vessel of the Company was acquired. As an instance of the prevailing prudence, we may note that a bargain was struck with her owners by which she was to revert to them for half the sum paid on her return from the first voyage. On the following day two other ships, the *Hector* and the *Ascension*, were purchased; while about the wharves and warehouses might have been seen groups of active burghers busily chaffering for lots of varied merchandise and petty commodities wherewith to compound a cargo for their little fleet.

To a certain attorney of the name of Altham belongs the credit of drawing up the patent of privileges to the "Society of Adventurers to the East Indies" (as the Company was provisionally entitled), for which we read in the minutes he was the richer by the sum of four pounds. This patent was thereupon ordered to be submitted to the Queen and Council for approbation.

Meanwhile all this confidence, all these active

preparations, could not but be viewed at Court as an indication that the merchants of London were firmly bent upon having their own way in this matter of trade to the Indies. The little pro-Catholic clique at Court, while eminently reluctant to give any offence to the King of Spain, had the best possible reasons also for not needlessly obstructing a project upon which the wealthy guildmen had set their heart. Thus, not daring to combat public opinion, the time seemed ripe for doing something for their friends and so exert a direct influence upon the management of the venture.

For some months one of the most assiduous courtiers, Sir Edward Michelbourne, had been pestering his friend Burleigh to get for him a patent for the Indian trade, but in view of the priority of the application of the London citizens this was at present out of the question. Nor would the Queen hear of it. But there was another way. Why not bring gentle pressure to bear upon the new Company to create Michelbourne leader of the expedition?[1] Even if he participated in a subordinate rank, or as master of only one of the vessels, it would ensure the presence of an agent of the Court, who might at a crisis be counted upon to arrogate to himself an authority commensurate with his social rank, but little

[1] Buckhurst, the new Lord High Treasurer, recommended him (16th Oct., 1599) to the Company as "principal commander" for their first voyage. A year later he wrote again to the same effect, using much persuasion, to the Company. But the most the latter could be prevailed on to do was to permit Michelbourne to subscribe, and in the list of those to whom the charter was granted his name is fourth. Michelbourne's subscription money, however, was never forthcoming.

justified by any share he had in the undertaking. Likewise, if there were any spoils likely to be laid hold of for the Crown at any future time, Michelbourne was the very man to report all faithfully.

But the merchant adventurers, whose perceptions were keen-whetted, immediately scented all the possibilities of the situation. They refused to be dictated to, even by the Lord Treasurer of the realm, and, although still in the precarious character of petitioners for their charter, had the courage to resist the proposal broached to them by the Court. In their reply they had, they said, resolved "not to employ any *gentleman* in any place of charge," and requested "that they might be allowed to sorte their business with men of their own qualitye, lest the suspiçcon of the employm[t] of gentlemen being taken hold of by the generalitie, do dryve a great number of the Adventurers to withdraw their contributions".

Merchants wise in their generation! The distinction between gentleman and trader was greater then than it became in a later day, even a brief decade or two thence. For as yet gold, silver and prize-money were the only magnets worthy the quest of a person of quality. The slower and more Christian processes of the devotees of the Ledger were despised; while there was an abundance within the realm of hot-headed, lion-hearted gallants, who, with little thought of future cargoes, of pounds and pence, of trade relations, were ready to pounce upon the heathen with drawn rapier—to scuttle a ship or sacrifice a crew for mere zest of glory. This kind of titled bravo, a common enough figure in

Queen Bess's reign, was not the man for the new Company. Its captains, factors, supercargoes and seamen would fight if need be, but they were charged to fix their sole thought upon profits. Even if they were to attack an enemy there was to be no needless risk; the issue of the attack must be clear, and the profits of the plunder appear well to warrant it. Not very heroic, nor very moral either, perhaps, this policy, but the merchant adventurers were men of business first and adventurers afterwards. Their creed was the Ledger, only unhappily with most of their servants the traditions of the time and the propensities of human nature were against that creed; wherefore the pacific injunctions of the Company were as often as not disregarded. Michelbourne, highly incensed at the rejection of his overtures, retired to meditate revenge.

The season advanced; it grew necessary to hasten the final arrangements for a voyage in the spring. The adventurers soon realised that if their fleet was to venture into the long-acknowledged hunting-grounds of the Portuguese, there was pressing need for a bigger craft than any they yet boasted. The Earl of Cumberland had just such a warship as they desired, and was willing to dispose of it. She was the *Malice Scourge*,[1] of 600 tons, and the earl offered to sell his property (which had seen a good deal of privateering, by-the-bye) for £4,000 to the merchant adventurers. A bargain was finally struck for £3,700, and the privateer, under the name of

[1] Sir William Hunter gives it as the *Mare Scourge*, but it is named the *Malice Scourge* in the Minutes and in Bruce's *Annals*.

the *Red Dragon*,[1] passed into the possession of the Company, and was made its flagship for the first voyage.[2] A pinnace was also bought for £300 for the purpose of conveying provisions for the fleet on the voyage, which, it was reckoned, would last a period of twenty months. A sum of £6,600 4s. 10d. was therefore set down for ship's victuals. As for the cargo, it consisted of iron, tin (wrought and unwrought), lead, 80 pieces of broadcloth of all colours, 80 pieces of Devonshire kersies and 100 pieces of Norwich stuffs, with smaller articles designed as presents to the officers at the ports at which trade was to be opened.

Two important steps were now in order—to elect a Governor of the Company and choose a commander and servants for their first expedition. Many would have desired to see Staper selected for the first-named office, but Staper himself wished to gain over a more influential man. A general meeting was held on 30th October, and the twenty-four directors, then chosen in place of the previous seventeen in office, without casting a ballot, voted that Alderman Thomas Smythe[3] should

[1] The *Red Dragon* became afterwards simplified to the *Dragon*. This ship had a brilliant career in the Company's service, and was not sunk by the Dutch until a "cruel, bloody fight" in October, 1619.

[2] To accelerate the speed of the shipwrights, who had in hand the work of refitting the warship for its service, the Company decreed a barrel of beer per diem, to prevent their leaving their work "to runne to the Ale-house".

[3] Born 1558, died 1625. His grandfather, ancestor of Viscount Strangford, had been a tradesman at Corsham, Wilts. Smythe's name was commemorated by Baffin in "Smith's Sound". He retained the Governorship until 1621. See Compton Reade's *The Smith Family*, 1902.


VERA EFFIGIES PRÆCLARISS:MI VIRI DOM:NI THOMÆ SMITH EQUITIS AURATI ETC.
The honourable Sr Thomas Smith Knight, late Embas:
ador from his Ma.stie to ye great Emperour
of Russie, Gouernour of ye Hon.ble and famous
Societyes of Marchants tradinge to ye East-
Indies, Musscovy, the French and Somer
Jlands Company; Tresurer for Virginia. etc.
Simon Passeus sculp: Lond: Ao. 1616.
Jo: Woodall exc:

be the first Governor of the East India Company. The veteran Captain James Lancaster, who had been "brought up among the Portuguese; lived among them as a gentleman, a soldier and a merchant";[1] the hero and survivor of Raymond's ill-fated expedition of 1591, was appointed to the *Red Dragon* and created "General" or Admiral of the Fleet. Captain John Davis, another marine veteran, famous for his voyages to the North-West, who had already been with Van Houtman in the Indies, was made second in command, under the title of "Pilot-Major". John Middleton, William Brand and John Heyward commanded the other three ships, all having sailed over the route before. It had previously been resolved that "no factor or other officer to be employed in the viage shall be admitted or appointed thereto but by a general Assemblie of the Adventurers and then elected by the consent of the greater number of them assembled".[2] Altogether there were 480 men engaged for the first voyage. Each of the ships had a factor of the first class aboard, together with a number of subordinate factors, and factors provisionally appointed without salary, to take the places of any who should drop out by reason of tempests, fever, battle, drowning or other fatalities. All these factors, to the number of thirty-six, were forced to give security,

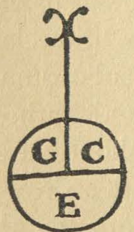
[1] Markham, *Voyages of Sir James Lancaster*.

[2] This may be held to mark the inception of the East India Company's civil service. A factor, according to Dr. Johnson, is the term applied to "an agent for another; one who transacts business for another; commonly a substitute in mercantile affairs".

this being £500 for the first class, 500 marks for the second class, and £200 and £100 for the others.

In the matter of wages and recompense an idea may be obtained from the allowances granted to Captain Davis, who was to have £100 with £200 on credit for a private adventure of his own. As an incitement to activity and zeal in the Company's service, if, on his return, the profit on the voyage should yield 200 per cent., Davis was to be allowed £500; if 300 per cent., £1,000; if 500 per cent., £2,000. The other officers had proportionate rewards to stimulate their exertions.

The final act of the merchant adventurers, before they received their charter of incorporation, which, indeed, was at that very moment being signed by the Queen, for it was the thirty-first day of December, 1600, was to devise and make lawful a particular trade mark, "in order that the goodes shipt by the Companie, and the caskes, shall be marked with this generall marke as in the mergent," and to order "that an iron be prepared, which shal make the saide marke". Not until some months later did the Court sanction the payment of twenty marks for assigning corporate arms to the Company.[1]



On the last day, then, of the bustling, turbulent,

[1] 1st May, 1601. In this early coat of arms the shield appears divided into three bands, the uppermost containing the Tudor roses and the Royal arms, while beneath them are three three-masted ships sailing on an azure sea. The supporters are a blue sea-lion on either side; the crest is a terrestrial globe, beflagged right and left, and the punning motto: "Deus indicat."

picturesque century, the society of adventurers was formally erected into a corporation under the title of the "Governor and Company of Merchants of London trading to the East Indies". Two hundred and fifteen persons, with the Earl of Cumberland at their head, by virtue of his rank and his single share, composed the body to which the charter was originally granted. They were vested by the sovereign with the power of purchasing lands without limit in the East. Upon the Company, the sons of its members when of age, its apprentices, servants and factors in India, was conferred for the term of fifteen years the privilege of an exclusive trade "into the countries and ports of Asia and Africa and into and from all the islands, ports, towns and places of Asia, Africa and America, or any of them beyond the Cape of Buena Esperanza or the Straits of Magellan, where any traffic may be used".

Thus one part—the greatest part—of the battle was won by the merchant adventurers. But they had several refractory detachments to bring into line. After repeated calls upon their members, it was discovered that the total amount paid in (£30,133 6s. 8d.) was far from being adequate to defray the cost of the proposed expedition. The expense of equipping the four ships alone amounted to £39,771, while the cargoes provided for the fleet, exclusive of the separate adventures of the servants, was valued at £28,742 in bullion and £6,860 in merchandise. The additional sums came so slowly, and were of such paltry amount, that certain of the more zealous and confident of the Company banded

themselves together and so made up the deficit. By this means the capital stood at £68,373.

By February all was in readiness. It only remained for Elizabeth to bestow upon the leaders of the first expedition of the East India Company her royal blessing, and equip Captain Lancaster with a bundle of those indispensable letters to the unknown monarchs of the East, without which the venture would have lacked a most familiar attribute of such undertakings. As these monarchs presumably dwelt and ruled far apart, no necessity was discovered for varying severally the verbiage, wherefore the terms employed in these missives to these remote and shadowy potentates were identical. Names and titles being enshrouded in mystery, space was provided for these in each, to be filled in by the "General," "Pilot-Major," "Captain" or factor on the spot.

In the following style ran this letter in duplicate:—

"Elizabeth, by the Grace of God, Queen of England, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, etc.

"To the greate and mightie Kinge of —— our Lovinge Brother, Greetinge; etc."

The grotesque complacency of the dusky master of a few square miles of tropical swamp or island, at such unwonted euphuism penned by the mistress of so many European warriors, mariners and ships as the Queen of England was said to possess, must have been highly edifying to witness. Several of such scrolls of parchment were preserved by their

recipients for generations; probably more than one is still treasured in the closet of some petty rajah whose ancestors fell to be merely the pensioners of the Company—dreaded far more than they ever dreaded Elizabeth's august descendant.

Her Majesty, in the course of this letter, was made to dwell upon the causes which led her to send her merchants forth, such as the "lawful traffique of merchandizing which have moved us to geave licenses to divers of our subjects, who have been stirred upe with a desire (by a long and dangerous navigaccon) to finde out and visitt yor territories and dominions, being famous in these parts of the world, and to offer you commerce and traffic, in buying and interchanging of commodities with our people".

Nor did Elizabeth in her letter neglect to do as much harm to the Spaniards and Portuguese as she could, by exposing the extravagance of their pretensions, besides expressing the confident belief that her Londoners would serve the East Indies with better goods and on better terms than the members of those two nations, who, she remarked, have been "the only impediments both to our subjects and divers other merchants in the parts of Europe, that they have not hitherto visited your countrie with trade, whilst the saide Portuguese pretended themselves to be the sovereign lordes and princes of all your territories, and give it out that they hold your nation and people as subject to them, and in their stiles and titles do write themselves Kinges of the East Indies".

On the 13th of February the shores of the Thames, lined with the merchant adventurers and a clamorous host of well-wishers, receded gradually from the sight of Lancaster and his fellow-servants of the new society.

And so sailed away the East India Company's first fleet in quest of trade with the peoples of the countries and distant islands of the Orient.

CHAPTER III.

The Portuguese Laugh too Soon.

THEIR hearts high with hope, Lancaster and the rest of the Company's pioneers had sailed no further than the coast of Guinea, when one morning off their bows a Portuguese carrack was sighted. How lucky it was that, whatever the dilatory Peace Commissioners had since accomplished, the pretty quarrel between Elizabeth and Philip had not been patched up when the Devon coast was left behind.[1]

No time was lost in parley. They ran the carrack down, boarded her and transferred from her hold to their own ships 146 butts of wine, 176 jars of oil, 55 hogsheads and casks of meal, amongst other freight. Gratifying as this adventure first appeared, its joys were dearly bought. Whatever scurvy or Guinea fever subsequently befell the crew, it is to be feared those 146 butts of wine tell their own story. Temptation and temperance did not in Elizabeth's day—do they now?—go hand in hand. When the fleet gained Table Bay and anchored there, it was found that 105 men had perished since leaving England.

[1] Lancaster had been delayed in the Downs "for want of wind," and finally sailed from Torbay, 20th April. There was a further delay of more than a month in crossing the "doldrums" off the African coast.

Six weeks were needed for rest and recuperation before the Company's servants were able to proceed. On the 29th of October the fleet sailed again, doubling the Cape of Good Hope on the 1st of November and reaching Madagascar on the 17th of that month.

At Madagascar they remained all winter, but seeing no trade nor any potentate upon whom they could serve Elizabeth's gracious letter of introduction, they were fain at length to depart. After a call at the Nicobar Islands, Lancaster and his crews arrived at Achin, in Sumatra, on the 5th of June, 1602.

If the Company's "General" reckoned on finding at this celebrated spice island a clear field for his industry and enterprise he was grievously disappointed. In the harbour of Achin loomed sixteen or seventeen sail of various colours, textures and nationalities, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, Indian and Chinese, from Guzerat, Calicut, Malabar, Pegu and Patani, who had come on a mission identical with his own. Nevertheless the Dutch traders there, probably conscious of no great security themselves, and not yet inclined to display that fierce jealousy and arrogance soon to distinguish them, greeted Lancaster cordially. He begged of them to tell him the name, titles and disposition of the ruling king or rajah of the district, and this favour they readily accorded. The "General" made haste to fill in the blanks in one of the royal epistles he bore, while a factor and some seamen were sent back to the *Red Dragon* for gifts deemed suitable for His Highness, Moga, King of Achin, to whom also were couriers despatched to apprise His Highness of the new arrivals and

their desire to pay him a visit. There was also a tactful allusion to presents, which comprised "a belt or girdle, a case of pistols, some plumes, looking-glasses, platters, spoons and glass toys, a pair of spectacles and an ewer of plain silver".

The Company had by no means judged in error when it regarded a stock of presents as making more for peace and a proper understanding than even the royal Elizabeth's letter and Captain Lancaster's courteous address. In this first instance they proved irresistible, and the King of Achin graciously granted Captain Lancaster the privilege he sought, namely, freedom of trade and immunity from the payment of customs. But the Company's man was not to be put off with mere word of mouth. Returning to his ship Lancaster called a conference of his officers, and between them they concocted and reduced to set phraseology on a double sheet of parchment a portentous treaty, which they afterwards translated into Portuguese and prevailed upon the King to sign. A copy of this instrument is in Whitehall: the first treaty between a native prince and the East India Company, the earliest document received from any servant of the Company in the East.

"I, most mighty King of Achin and Sumatra" (thus it runs), "to all persons that shall read this present writing, Greeting: In token of our especial friendship and upon many good considerations us moving and chiefly upon the contemplating of the gracious letters received from the famous Queen of England: we of our especial mere motion do signify

and declare to all people, that we have entertained into our friendship and holy league our well-beloved Sirinissima Reina de Englaterra to hold and keep true and faithful league with her according to the commendable course and law of all nations, unto whose subjects we wish much felicity, and therefore doth give and grant by these presents" (there is surely a touch of humour here on the part of the English adventurers), "for us, our heirs and successors, as much as in us lieth, to the said subjects of the most noble Queen of England, our confederate, and every one of them these articles, grants and privileges hereafter expressed and declared."

Whatever the wily Dutch and Portuguese may privately have thought of this solemn and grandiloquent treaty, there can be no doubt that Lancaster and his friends plumed themselves on an excellent stroke of business. Accustomed to settled forms and conditions of commerce, a treaty to them seemed of paramount importance. They did not know that the sway over his subjects of the Achin rajah was uncertain, that his very title of overlordship to the rest of the island was fiercely disputed. They held the precious treaty in their hands; but the worst of it was, the Dutch and Portuguese held all the pepper and spices. Three months did Lancaster linger at Achin waiting for cargo, powerless to translate the concession into Sumatran commodities. In September he lost temper and sailed away, leaving a couple of factors, named Starkie and Styles, behind him to get together as much produce as they could against his return.

The "General" struck out boldly for the Straits of Malacca, thinking that if he could not get a holdful of pepper peaceably and by gentle means, there was luckily an expedient free to an Englishman. He could not go cruising about fruitlessly for ever, wasting the Company's substance, but would make bold to turn the rows of bristling cannon of the *Red Dragon* upon the first Portuguese or Spanish vessel he chanced to come across or could find without much trouble. If such happened to be laden with the commodities he was in quest of, so much the better.

Good luck attended him, for while his chagrin at the Achin fiasco was still fresh, a Portuguese ship, of 900 tons, bound from St. Thomé,[1] was sighted—a worthy prey. Lancaster immediately opened fire, boarded her, terrified the crew and haled triumphantly forth the cloves and pepper from her bulging hold. Bidding adieu to his victim, Lancaster turned the prow of the *Red Dragon* back to Achin, where Starkie and Styles joyfully awaited their "General" with a cargo sufficient to fill one of the ships of the fleet. A leave-taking between Lancaster and the King of Achin ensued, his majesty handing the merchant mariner a letter to his "cousin" Elizabeth, Queen of England, France and Ireland, together with several presents. These Lancaster entrusted to Captain Brand, of the *Ascension*, to bear back at once to England, with his own reports,

[1] St. Thomé was a Portuguese settlement on the Coromandel coast, hard by Madraspatam, where the Company eventually set up a fort and factory in 1639-40.

letters and a cargo of Eastern produce. On 26th November the *Susan* followed on the return journey from another port.

The remaining two vessels of the Company's fleet made their way to Bantam, which they reached on the 18th of December. Here Lancaster sought out the boy-king, and had little difficulty in procuring, by means of bribes, similar concessions to those he had obtained at Achin. To say the truth the English merchandise which was offered the natives in exchange for their wares, the plates and mirrors, toys and cloths and tinware, created a great sensation amongst the natives of all the islands the Company's servants had visited, they having long been hardly used by the Portuguese and not too generously treated by the Dutch new-comers, who even then began to exhibit in the Indies that national failing of "giving too little and asking too much". The English set a new standard of trade in the East, even though they for many years gave less than a twentieth, even less than a fortieth, to the natives for pepper of the price it fetched in London.

On the other hand, we must remember the immense dangers of the trade. All this while there was a reverse to every fleeting picture of success. Lancaster had been losing his men. The prediction of the boasting Spaniards had not been entirely falsified. Whether from disease or diet, poison or fighting, scarcely a week elapsed—often not a day—without the small band of the Company's first servants being made still smaller by the hand of

death.[1] Even now, in the midst of the jubilation at Bantam, Captain John Middleton, one of those hardy and fearless brothers who had gone out to the Indies with Lancaster on his first voyage twelve years before, breathed his last.

As a rule, the excitement of gain was able to make light of death. Thus we read: "Walker dyed, laughing. Woodes and I staked two pieces-of-eight on his body, and after a long play, I wonne." If too high a price was not set on life in plague-stricken London, it was hardly valued a rush or a farthing in the East. Fighting was to these men an ordinary diversion, bloodshed an inevitable consequence, death an expected result. These early sea-dogs of the Company led rough lives, amused themselves roughly and died rough deaths. The mortality in the Company's service during the whole first century of its existence is appalling to modern sensibilities. "They walk but in charnel-houses," wrote John Fryer towards the close of the century.

Lancaster lost no time in following up his commercial advantages. He covenanted for a forty-ton pinnace with a foreign trader, packed it full of merchandise and despatched it to the Moluccas with two factors with instruction to establish, if possible, a settlement there. A factory was opened at Bantam, in spite of the jealousy of the Dutch, and entrusted to Starkie. Having thus attended fully to the

[1] Lancaster at first used lemon juice as a specific against scurvy. But its virtue seems to have been subsequently overlooked, and the seamen were allowed, observes Professor Laughton, "to go on suffering and dying wholesale for nearly 200 years".

affairs of his master, the Company, Lancaster finally sailed for home, 20th February, 1603.

In his absence, as we shall see, several notable things had happened.

Three months after Lancaster and the first fleet had finally left England, the Company lent its purse and its favour to a scheme for finding out what doughty John Davis had failed in doing, a north-west passage to India. This adventure, proposed by Captain George Waymouth, was carried out under the sole patronage and direction of the "Worll Fellowship of the M'chints of London, trading into the East Indies"; yet for two centuries and a half was the East India Company denied the credit of this "honorable ac̃con," which was attributed to the Muscovy and Turkey Companies.[1]

The project was brought under the notice of the Company, 24th July, 1601. On that day a letter from Waymouth was read out, and at a further General Court on 7th August, "on the question beinge made for the findinge out of the north-west passage, whether itt shalbe a vyage to seek itt, or not, being put to handes, it was consented unto for a vyage". It was decided that the expenses should be levied at the rate of 12d. in the pound, according to previous lists in the Company. It was thought sufficient to furnish two pinnaces, one of

[1] The act of injustice originated with Captain Waymouth himself. Purchas printed, in 1624, without note or comment, Waymouth's journal, in which the mis-statement is made, and the error was duly copied by a multitude of writers down to 1840, including Anderson in 1774 and Barrow in 1818. Rundall rectified it in 1849.—Hakluyt Society, *Voyages towards the North-West.*

fifty tons manned with sixteen men and one of forty tons with fourteen men, at a cost of about £3,000. The Company agreed to give Waymouth £100 for instruments and other requirements, and should he discover the passage he was to receive £500 and the recommendation of the Company, otherwise he was not "to ask anything for his pains and travel". A difficulty arose with the Muscovy Company, who asserted their exclusive right to navigate the Northern Seas.

A committee was appointed to ask "whether they would permit the East India Company to enter into the discovery of the passage, and wholly relinquish all claim of privilege thereunto during the continuance of the patent to the East India Company". But the Muscovy Company "seemed to have no liking to join in the discovery; they wanted to undertake it themselves, but decided upon no time for doing so". Another committee was appointed to confer with the Muscovy Company, and it was decided that, if the company would neither join in the discovery nor make the discovery themselves, an appeal should be made to the Privy Council. On 22nd December the Muscovy Company, "having received letters from the Privy Council," agreed to join the East India Company in the discovery. The committee appointed for both companies agreed upon the conditions and arrangements for the voyage, and it was decided to prosecute the discovery as soon as possible.

Notwithstanding all this, the East India Company finally set forth by themselves. On the 5th of January, 1602, "it was resolved for law that the

interest for the north-west passage is expressly in this Company". On the 11th "the voyage to the North-West was finally determined upon". It was ordered that the 12d. in the pound should be paid in by the last of March, that the Company should not be discredited, the discovery being made so public as well to our own country as to strangers in foreign parts. By the end of April everything was in readiness for the voyage; officers had been appointed and their salaries and supplies agreed upon, and the Privy Council had been petitioned to aid with their authority. The agreement with Captain Waymouth was signed, "the Queen's letters to the Emperors of China and Cathay" read, and auditors selected to audit the accounts of the cost of the voyage.

The expedition duly set forth, but in a few months the explorers were back again in England, soon enough to awaken the suspicions of the Company. Following angry recriminations, actions were begun against them, but Waymouth was exonerated, and was afterwards employed by the Company. The subscribers to the voyage all lost their money, and those who had failed to pay up found their indebtedness subtracted from the profits of Lancaster's voyage.

Other trials were in store for the adventurers even on Lancaster's return. Early in June, 1603, a forlorn and reluctant beadle came knocking at the houses of the directors of the East India Company. Many were gone; two at least were dead; the Exchange, contrary to its usual custom, was silent and deserted. The streets of the City rattled with dead carts and tumbrils. Between De-

cember, 1602, and December, 1603, upwards of 38,000 persons came to perish of the plague; and on a midsummer day, when a messenger came spurring up from Plymouth to announce the arrival of the *Ascension*,[1] the capital was hung with symbols of mourning and pervaded by gloom. Yet the merchant adventurers bestirred themselves, such as still lingered in the City. Orders were sent down to Plymouth that the ship was not to break bulk until anchored in the Thames. Suitable warehouses were engaged, tithes paid to the Lord High Admiral for a prize captured at sea, and on the 16th of June the entry into the Thames was publicly announced. A further £6 had then to be paid for pilotage and £917 for customs to the King before the adventurers could ascertain how their first adventure had fared. The captain's report and budget of news were scanned eagerly. The first ship of the Company's fleet had brought back 210,000 lb. of loose pepper, 1,100 lb. of cloves, 6,000 lb. of cinnamon and 4,080 lb. of gum lacquer. A gang of porters were engaged to land this precious cargo; so precious, indeed, that the Company were at pains to order "six suits of canvas doublet and hose without pockets," lest the cupidity of its longshoremen should be too sorely tempted.

The other ships duly arrived, Lancaster himself reaching England in September. His fleet had brought home more than a million pounds of spices.

[1] "The sum of 5*l.* was paid to 'Master Middleton of Plymouth' for his paines in ryding hither w^th^ the first report of the coming of the *Assention* out of the East Indies."—*Court Book.*

The directors prepared for him an enthusiastic reception, in spite of the prevailing depression caused by the plague, and sent word that the sovereign desired his presence at Court where the honour of knighthood awaited the gallant adventurer.

That sovereign was no longer she whose long reign had witnessed and fostered the uprising of English commerce with the East. Almost the very first tidings received by Lancaster and his men as they approached their native land told that the great Elizabeth had passed away. It is not strange they shed tears; as a talisman to the mariners, sea-rovers, discoverers, pioneers and adventurers of that age, was the name of the last of the Tudor breed, whose pride it had been to make her people great and feared, to spurn petty obstacles, to prosper England's commerce and speed the ships of her growing navy into every port and every sea. The merchant adventurers, too, doubted if they had as much to hope for from Elizabeth's successor. They were not even sure that His Majesty would find it convenient to keep to the terms of their patent. We shall see if their apprehensions were baseless; but James seemed hardly the monarch to grant to common burghers privileges assiduously sought for by his courtiers.

Having become wealthy, Lancaster settled down in London and lent his assistance as a director to the newly-fledged Company. Under his supervision all the early voyages to both East and North-West were undertaken, and his name was given by the explorer Baffin to one of the chief inlets to Hudson's Bay.

The Company's first "General" died early in 1618, leaving the bulk of his property to London charities.

For the moment the Company gave less thought to its general rights than to the question of how to dispose of its 1,000,000 lb. of pepper and the rest of its stock of spices. Money was urgently required, and although the market price of pepper was then from eight to ten shillings a pound, on account of the plague and the general aloofness from trade few or no purchasers came forward. The merchant adventurers were not yet a joint-stock corporation in the modern sense; they had not yet the compact state which they assumed in 1612. The Governor and committee had been at their wits' end, first to induce the members of the Company to pay up their subscriptions, and subsequently to make good their delinquencies. Now, with many of their members dead or distant and pepper a drug on the market, they had instantly to find £35,000 for payment of wages and customs dues. So loosely hung was the Company at this juncture that it seemed to need but little to shatter it to pieces.

But it was to survive the crowning test. It will be remembered that Elizabeth had granted the charter upon the very clear understanding that the Company would despatch an expedition annually to the Indies. Agreeably to this notion, when the first ships had sailed away, a beadle went round with the subscription for the second voyage. The most that rewarded his labours were promises to pay £11,000. "Let us first see what the first voyage brings forth," remarked the prudent merchants to the Company's

beadle, in refusing any further subscriptions. But this, as was to be expected, did not satisfy the Queen. Her Majesty hoped for a great deal from the Indian trade. She had no mind to break with Philip and have all her pains for nothing. She told the merchant adventurers almost harshly to look to it ; but under the present constitution of the Company the Governor and committee were all but helpless. The Queen's illness and death gave them a respite, but it was a brief one, and terminated with Lancaster's return. The Privy Council quickly grew importunate, threatening to hand over the Company's privileges to a new set of adventurers with less parsimony and more zeal and regularity.

Under these threats the Company became genuinely alarmed, as well they might be, for at the head of the party of "gentlemen" hostile to their monopoly at Court suddenly appeared their arch-enemy, Sir Edward Michelbourne, who, owing to his connection with the Essex rebellion, had been under a kind of ban until James came to the throne.[1] Michelbourne had not forgotten or forgiven the Company's rejection of him three years before, simply because he was a person of quality and not a burgher. A turbulent, intriguing knight, he conceived a great career of glory and profit in the Eastern Seas, and was by no means above

[1] Although on examination he cleared himself, the East India Company seized a favourable opportunity for getting rid of one of their "gentlemen," and on 6th July, 1601, resolved that he was "disfranchised out of the freedom and privileges of this fellowship, and utterly disabled from taking any benefit or profit thereby". —*Calendar of State Papers*, East Indies, 1601.

lawless depredations. The Company's fear of him proved to be, as the sequel will show, well-founded. At present the birth of such rivalry spurred them on to meet and resolve that every subscriber of £250 to the first voyage should advance £200 towards a second, the said subscriber meanwhile receiving his profits of the first voyage in pepper, to be disposed of at his discretion. In March, 1604, therefore, a second expedition of the same four ships as the first set forth for the Indies.

This time the fleet was put under the command of Captain (later Sir) Henry Middleton, who sailed in the *Red Dragon.* With him went Christopher Colthurst of the *Hector*, Roger Styles of the *Ascension* and William Keeling of the *Susan.* In his instructions from the Company, Middleton was ordered to sail first for Bantam (where the *Dragon* and *Susan* were to be laden with Indian produce and sent home) and afterwards for the Moluccas and Banda (where a factory was to be established) and Amboyna.

Three days before Christmas Middleton reached Bantam. He was made welcome by the admiral of one of the many Dutch squadrons then seeking commerce in those waters. A ceremonial visit was made to the boy-king, who was presented with various gifts, what time the *Hector* and *Susan* proceeded to load with pepper "and divers fardels of merchandise". Middleton with the other two Company's ships then sailed for Amboyna, an island years afterwards to be darkened by the stain of a terrible tragedy. Here he was not permitted

to land unless he first obtained the written consent of the captain of the Portuguese fort. Middleton thereupon wrote craving permission to trade at Amboyna, telling the Portuguese commander that he need not scruple to grant him what he wished as the Queen of England was no more and there was now peace between their two countries. This latter was strictly true, but Middleton could hardly have known of it. Actually peace was not concluded until several months after the Company's fleet had left the Thames; but perhaps the commander felt justified in anticipating the signing of the treaty. On hearing the news, the Portuguese captain granted the Englishman's request, to which decision he was impelled by fear of a hostile combination on the part of the new-comers and the Dutch.

It is possible that bold action on Middleton's part at this moment might have altered the whole current of our contemporary relations in the East. The Portuguese sought an ally: he might have landed at Amboyna and formed an alliance with the Portuguese against the Dutch. He hesitated; it was soon too late. James and Philip might be at peace, but it was quite otherwise with Philip and his revolted Province of Flanders. In practice, it was shortly to be otherwise with Dutch and English in the Indies. While Middleton was preparing to land, Dutch guns were heard in the harbour: the hapless Portuguese commander, whose forces Middleton could himself have either joined or overcome, was called upon to surrender. He refused: the Dutchmen landed and stormed his stronghold, and while

the English looked on, the Dutch were masters of Amboyna. All hope of trade had vanished so far as Middleton was concerned : the native chiefs refused to allow him to purchase any cloves or spices without a licence from the Dutch. Such licence might once have been likely : it was little likely to be granted now. Already a fierce rivalry between the two nations was begun. Fuel was heaped high on the incipient flame by an event long remembered in the East.

One fine day an English fleet sailed into Bantam, where a Dutch vessel lay, loaded for a return to Holland. Amidst the astonishment and hateful execrations of her captain and crew, the English fleet set upon the Dutchman, and plundering her, sailed away. The English commander did not serve under orders from the Company, and two years elapsed before it heard of this deed. When it did, and learned the name of its perpetrator, the indignation of the merchant adventurers knew no bounds. Their late "gentleman," Sir Edward Michelbourne, was obtaining his revenge.

In the winter and spring of 1603-4 the Company fancied it had saved its monopoly from infringement. But Michelbourne had a persuasive tongue ; he was not to be so easily baulked in a meditated enterprise. In June he succeeded in procuring from King James a royal licence of discovery and trade from Cambay to China, "notwithstanding any grant or charter to the contrary". But the Company's enemy was a buccaneer, not a trader ; and his exploits in the Eastern Seas, extending over

eighteen months, seriously damaged English trade interests wherever he made himself known or felt. He was the first of those interlopers who subsequently menaced so effectually the exclusive privileges of the East India Company. His flagrant spoliation of a Dutch ship at Bantam sowed deep the seeds of hatred and revenge between the rival traders in the East.[1]

Sorely disappointed, Middleton sailed away to the Moluccas, leaving the *Ascension* to cruise towards Banda. It was in the neighbourhood of the Moluccas that the "General" met with a singular adventure. The King of Ternate and certain nobles of his Court were roaming the waters in a native craft when they were espied by the crew of a piratical junk, who instantly gave them chase. In the nick of time the dauntless *Red Dragon* came upon the scene; Middleton perceived the situation at a glance. Training his guns upon the sea-brigands, he rescued the king and his friends, received them on board, and afterwards landed them on their native soil. In return for this signal favour, His Majesty of Ternate, having requested the English to name a boon, seized a pencil and affixed his signature to one of their blank treaties, of which they were never without an abundance in their ships' chests and lockers. The king was, doubtless, rejoiced at having to make no more

[1] Michelbourne had seduced John Davis to serve with him on the *Tiger* as pilot. Davis met his death off Java in 1605, shortly after the plundering of a rich China ship. Michelbourne returned to London the following year and died about 1611.

exorbitant concession. On their part, the Company's men were always ready to make allies amongst the native princes and attached a value to the compacts with even the smallest powers, as made the more overbearing Dutch and Portuguese smile, wondering at the simplicity of their rivals. Cannon and cutlasses were their arguments.

Middleton now sailed for the clove-yielding Tidore, where the Portuguese had a factory. Here a regular settlement was made for the Company, the commander afterwards continuing his voyage to Makjan, where he failed to get a cargo. He was lying off Taffasol when the brisk exchange of artillery reached his ear. Putting out for shore to ascertain the cause, he quickly learned that the Dutch had joined forces with the Ternate folk to capture a fort which the Portuguese had at Taffasol. The Portuguese resisted stoutly, giving the besiegers as good as they sent, and might at length have driven them off, but that a chance spark ignited the powder supply. The fort was blown to fragments, annihilating most of the inmates. For the unhappy survivors of this catastrophe Middleton did not hesitate to intercede, or they had been slain on the spot. The King of Ternate granted the request, but when the English set about treating with the natives, who owed a sort of allegiance to the sovereign of Ternate, the Dutch admiral entered a loud protest. He would not hear, he said, of the English traders getting a footing on that island, and asserted that the king had made a prior treaty with himself. For a few moments poor Agiu was confronted by a

dilemma. Dread of the Dutch, his allies, and gratitude to Middleton for his timely intervention divided him. The bigger cannon and cutlasses prevailed.

Meantime the Company's men were in the very act of bartering for cloves at Ternate. In the midst of their transactions a Dutch factor appeared on the scene and peremptorily ordered the English to begone. At the close of much fruitless parley, the *Red Dragon* and her crew and factors sailed away to Taffasol and Bantam, where the *Ascension* was, eventually following the *Hector* and the *Susan* on the route home to England.

But the *Susan* never reached her destination. She was the first ship acquired by the Company and the first to perish, going down somewhere off the eastern coast of Africa, the circumstances of her fate remaining a mystery. The *Hector* nearly shared the fate of her companion. She was overtaken by Middleton in a truly forlorn condition off Saldanha, luckily not beyond repair. After considerable delay, in May, 1606, the three ships were once again back in the Thames.

Taken together as one venture, these two first voyages of the Company returned a clear profit of 95 per cent. on the outlay, not, however, including interest for the eight years from 1601 to 1609. For not until the latter year were the affairs of the joint voyages finally wound up.

The whole system of separate voyages, which prevailed from 1606 to 1612, was a cumbrous and mistaken one. It involved distinct groups of subscribers from amongst the members of the Company,

who were to share in the profits of, and be responsible for, only such expeditions as they had actually helped to furnish forth.

A natural consequence of such a system was that, what with the delay in transit or the magnitude of their operations, one voyage was still being vigorously pursued by one set of adventurers while another was in active process through a totally different group. A ludicrous rivalry ensued,[1] damaging to their common interests; but the difficulties of reorganisation made the anomaly outlive a perception of its gross inconveniences and even of its dangers.

The Company's third voyage, which left Tilbury, 12th March, 1607, comprised the *Dragon*, the *Hector* and the *Consent*, a pinnace of 105 tons. On this occasion the commanders were William Keeling, William Hawkins, a relation of the illustrious Elizabethan mariner, and David Middleton, the third and youngest of the fearless brothers. Henry Middleton, who was knighted by King James, remained at home to enjoy an interval of ease. The expense of the new equipment was £28,620, the adventurers sending out £17,600 of bullion and £7280 in merchandise.

As to this bullion, many at Court loudly demurred at so much gold and silver leaving the State, and the Company did not escape attack at the hands of the perverted or perverse political economists of

[1] The agents of several separate voyages in India were trading at the same time and bidding against each other for spices and Indian products.—Hunter's *British India*, vol. i., p. 27.

the day. The reason of the Company's export in this particular lay in the constant demand by its servants in the East for the precious metals which could be coined into sequins and doubloons or wrought into rings and ornaments. For these there was always a heavy demand in the countries wherein the best trade lay.

The *Dragon*, accompanied by the *Consent*, arrived at Bantam in October, after a pleasant voyage distinguished by the performance of Shakespeare's plays. Although the Company prohibited gaming, the drama appears to have been considered a beneficial source of recreation, and the following curious and interesting entries connected with the subject are quoted by Rundall as having been copied from the journal of the *Dragon*[1] :—

1607.

September 4. [At Serra Leona.] Towards night the kinges interpreter came, and brought me a letter from the Portingall, wher in (like the faction) he offered me all kindly services. The bearer is a man of maruailous redie witt and speakes in eloquent Portugues. He layt abord me.

—— 5. Captain Hawkins dined with me, wher my companions acted *Kinge Richard the Second.*

—— 30 (?). I envited Captain Hawkins to a ffishe dinner and had *Hamlet* acted abord me : w^ch^ I permitt to keepe my people from idlenes and unlawfull games or sleepe.

[1] *Cf.* Version by Mr. Foster in *Notes and Queries*, 21st July, 1900.

Bantam was reached in due time and there the *Dragon* was loaded with spices. On the voyage out Keeling had parted company with the *Hector*. A momentous mission had been entrusted to Captain Hawkins, the result of which the Company awaited with deep interest. The captain was ordered to proceed to Surat,[1] leave his ship and direct his footsteps to Agra, with a letter from the King of England to the Great Mogul Jehangir to seek a treaty of trade. In this attempt, as we have seen, Mildenhall had already failed.

Hawkins arrived at Surat during 1607, but the Portuguese at Goa were quick to take alarm, foreseeing the evil consequences to them which might follow the success of Hawkins' mission. They resolved to give the venturesome Englishman a lesson for his pains. From the first, Portuguese spies dogged Hawkins's progress. Portuguese agents threw all kinds of annoying obstacles, little and great, in his path. Nothing, however, could stop him: Hawkins reached Agra. But his letter was never read by the Mogul.

[1] Surat was situated near the mouth of the river Tapti, and in 1608 was described as "one of the most eminent cities for trade in all India". It had been conquered by Akbar in 1573. "I have twice visited this place—the first focal point of all our operations in the East, and the centre of all our earliest commercial dealings with the people of India. Every part of the town is suggestive of interesting reminiscences. The boundaries of the Portuguese, Dutch, English and French factories may still be traced, and the fort built by the French is kept by us in good repair. . . . It is greatly to be regretted that the river Tapti, once deep and navigable, has been allowed to accumulate silt till large vessels can no longer enter."—Sir Monier Williams in *Contemporary Review*, April, 1878.

After dragging out a long and weary time at the Indian capital, Hawkins was fain to abandon his mission and return to Surat. Here his arrival happily coincided with the visit of another of the Company's ships, under Sir Henry Middleton, outward bound on a fourth expedition.

While Hawkins was still toiling over the road from Surat to Agra, and battling with the machinations of Portuguese spies, Captain Keeling was seeing the *Dragon* safely loaded with spices at Bantam. He then boarded the pinnace and sailed over to Banda, which island he reached on 8th February, 1609. It was already regarded by the Dutch as their own perquisite, but Keeling, careless of their pretensions, went ashore, interviewed the chief or rajah, and got permission to erect a factory for the English Company.

Hardly were the timbers hewn, however, before a trio of Dutch vessels put in an appearance, landed their crews and set about imitating Keeling's example, but on a more extensive and warlike scale. A proclamation was issued warning the English to depart within three days' time, and to attempt no trade with the natives upon fear of incurring Dutch displeasure. To all this Keeling gave not the slightest attention; he continued his bargaining and sailed away to Jaccatra, while the Dutch agents and factors stood menacingly on the Banda shore, shaking their fists, but not yet venturing upon armed reprisals. On the 19th of May Keeling was back again in the Downs with a costly freight.

By the time the fourth voyage was undertaken by the Company in March, 1608, the policy which the Hollanders had seen fit to pursue in the East Indies had won for them the dislike of the natives, largely mingled with fear, wherever their transactions carried. They had now thrown off the mask of deference and conciliation, and sought to threaten and coerce the spice growers and spice merchants in every island upon whose shores they had made a footing.

The London merchant adventurers, to whom these doings on the part of their trade rivals were reported, resolved to take advantage of this unwisdom of the Dutch Company, and otherwise to oppose their pretensions. Captain Alexander Sharpeigh, of the *Ascension*, who was given charge of the fourth voyage, was especially instructed to establish factories at Banda, Ternate, Tidore, Priaman, as well as in India proper. He and his companion, Captain Richard Rowles, of the *Union*, were first to call at Socotra and Mocha or Aden, in the hope of finding a cargo nearer home, in which case they were ordered to load and return as quickly as possible. The matter of Chinese trade was also touched upon in Sharpeigh's orders from the Company, for this trade, together with that of Japan, had as yet been overlooked.

"Try and induce the Chinese," urged the Company upon Sharpeigh, "who come to Bantam to bring there from China sleeve and sewing silks, as also some raw silk, that we may fall into some trade with them; and see if they can sell any of our

English cloth to them, that they may be brought to use thereof."[1]

The merchant adventurers, it is to be feared, wot little of the conservatism of the inhabitants of the Middle Kingdom. They doubtless conjured up in the mind's eye a vision of the natives of Peking, Canton and Amoy perambulating the streets of those cities clad in respectable English kersies, tweeds and Norfolk homespun, in lieu of the effeminate gossamer draperies and cotton paddings they affected then, and do still, as their every-day attire. The Chinese trade was to expand, nevertheless, but in a direction hardly anticipated by any merchant then driving hard bargains on the Royal Exchange. The Company's servants reported to their masters faithfully the custom of the Chinese in partaking of an infusion of an aromatic plant called "tay,"[2] but that the dried leaves of this plant would ever become a staple in Europe and the importation bring millions sterling to the Company's coffers and to the revenue of England, was an idea which would have

[1] Richard Cocks reported in 1613 that the Japanese were so addicted to silks that they "do not enter into consideration of the benefit of wearing cloth. But," he added philosophically, "time may alter their minds."

[2] Olearius, in his travels through Muscovy, Tartary and Persia, observes that "the Persians are great frequenters of the taverns or tipling houses, which they call Tazri Chattai Chane, in regard they may have Thé or Cha, which the Usbeques Tartars bring hither from Chattai. It is an herb which hath long and narrow leaves about an inch in length and half an inch in breadth. In order to the keeping and transportations of it, they dry it, so that it turns to a dark grey colour, inclining to black, and so shrivelled up that it seems not to be what it really is ; but as soon as it is put into warm water it spreads and re-assumes its former green colour."

been laughed at as absurd. As yet the most they had received—and this indirectly—was a little silk and a few dozen plates and cups and vases of China-ware out of the rich and populous Chinese Empire.

The voyage of 1608 was undertaken half-heartedly, as the Company felt that its patent under the new monarch hung by a slender thread. In view of Michelbourne's achievements at Court and in the East Indies it could boast but little security, either as regarded its monopoly or its present profits. Yet by this time Michelbourne himself was back home again, still importuning them, still threatening, only the knight's claws had been pared, and he was powerless to do further harm to the Company. Unhappily, there were others ready to take his place. One Richard Penkevell had prevailed upon King James to grant him a patent of trade to China and the Spice Islands by either a north-west or north-east passage, which, if he had discovered it, would have rendered the old Cape route worthless. Such a passage, of course, did not exist, at least for practical purposes, but it took two and a half centuries to learn this truth. In the meantime such coquetting by adventurers with the Court could only add to the Company's apprehensions and uncertainty.

But two ships then sailed forth this year. They flung themselves out of the windy Thames all gloomily, yet never recking of the cruel fate in store for both. Touching at Teneriffe they arrived at Table Bay, where they lingered until the middle of September. On resuming the voyage they became separated in a storm, but the *Ascension*

eventually reached Socotra. Seventeen months after leaving home Captain Sharpeigh headed her prow for Surat, but the waters of the river Amlicka were treacherous, the vessel wanted a pilot, and at the river's mouth the *Ascension* ran upon a shoal and sank. Luckily Sharpeigh and his companions were saved. The majority made their way overland amidst manifold difficulties and privations to Surat. The others struck out for Goa, at which seat of the Portuguese Empire in the East they offered their services to the captain of a vessel bound for Lisbon.

Meanwhile the *Union*, keeping on her solitary way, duly arrived at Achin, where she shipped some pepper, securing the rest of her cargo at Priaman. Congratulating himself on his good fortune, her captain set sail for home, probably wondering if the *Ascension* had much preceded him. The white cliffs of England were almost visible to Rowles and his crew when a tempest arose. The *Union* ran straight upon some rocks off the Brittany coast and was dashed to pieces with all on board.

While both tragedy and misadventure were unknown to the members of the Company, who still hopefully counted on the profits the *Ascension* and the *Union* would fetch them, the general horizon of their affairs suddenly brightened. The King's attitude towards them altered. The declaration of their profits on the first and second voyages and the continued amazing success of the Dutch Company elicited the admiration and the cupidity of the nobility and gentry. Not here and there a bold, dashing spirit, but the whole Court was now ready

to join hands with the merchant adventurers of the London guilds in what they called the "fit and proper pursuit of riches in the East Indies".

The East India Company had been an attractive mystery to the English middle and lower classes. It now came to be the vogue at Court. At this time must have been playing *Twelfth Night* and *The Merchant of Venice*, that most exquisitely planned of Shakespeare's comedies, wherein are packed so many allusions to the fashionable commerce of the day.

"I would have," says the sprightly Clown in the former play, "men of such constancy put to sea, that their business might be everything and their intent everywhere; for that's it that always make a good voyage of nothing." In this passage we have set down almost word for word the gist of the Company's instructions to its servants.

Malvolio's face, the dramatist tells us, is "as full of lines as the new map of the augmentation of the Indies," wherein had been lately delineated coasts and islands never even guessed before. Salarino in *The Merchant of Venice* struck a personal chord with many of his auditors, who sat on chairs or benches in the Globe theatre, when he delivered such a speech as this:—

> Your mind is tossing on the ocean;
> There, where your argosies with portly sail,—
> Like signiors and rich burghers of the flood,
> Or, as it were, the pageants of the sea,—
> Do overpeer the petty traffickers,
> That curt'sy to them, do them reverence,
> As they fly by them with their woven wings.

Salanio freely confesses that if he had placed his money in such an adventure, his mind would be filled with anxiety for the issue.

> I should be still
> Plucking the grass, to know where sits the wind;
> Peering in maps for ports, and piers, and roads;
> And every object that might make me fear
> Misfortune to my ventures, out of doubt,
> Would make me mad.

Many members of the East India Company must have experienced the precise feelings ascribed by the poet to Antonio's friend, who had staked his cash upon a voyage to the Orient, who could not so much as gaze upon the running sands in an hour-glass without thinking

> Of shallows and of flats;
> And see my wealthy *Andrew* dock'd in sand,
> Vailing her high-top lower than her ribs,
> To kiss her burial. Should I go to church,
> And see the holy edifice of stone,
> And not bethink me straight of dangerous rocks?
> Which, touching but my gentle vessel's side,
> Would scatter all her spices on the stream;
> Enrobe the roaring waters with my silks;
> And, in a word, but even now worth this,
> And now worth nothing?

The fate of the *Union*, the *Ascension* and the *Susan* may well have convinced the merchant adventurers that "ships are but boards, sailors but men; there be land rats and water pirates, peril of waters, winds and rocks". Nevertheless, in spite of calamities, vicissitudes and delays, the trade with the East could be made profitable. Only it must

have the full co-operation and sympathy of the monarch and Court; its patent of privileges must no longer lie under a cloud; the trade must needs be undertaken on a more generous scale if the London Company were to compete with their Dutch rivals.

Sir Thomas Smythe and his fellow-members saw that the changed temper of the Court towards the Indian trade, while a source of danger to the Company's monopoly, might readily be converted into an additional strength and security. To strive to keep out the courtiers and folk of quality was an unwise policy, because it would almost surely result in their present exclusive privileges being granted to somebody else who had the ear of the King. In a few years the term for which their charter was granted would expire; prudence dictated an alliance with the nobles and gentry, before such alliance was too late.

One solitary ship went out on the fifth voyage of the Company, the *Expedition*, under David Middleton. Scarcely had they witnessed its departure than the merchant adventurers met at their Governor's house and resolved to make application to the King for a renewal of their privileges. They had previously taken into their confidence certain nobles at Court. They accompanied their memorial with such explanation of their chartered rights as they deemed expedient to forestall all future pretexts for questioning their authority or infringing the terms of their privileges of trade.

Thus appealed to, and with the example of his

illustrious and beloved predecessor before his eyes, James was not to be outdone in generosity even by Elizabeth. With the same pen that affixed his royal sign-manual to the charter of England's first American colony of Virginia, he granted (31st May, 1609) fresh letters-patent to the East India Company.[1] Instead of limiting the Company's monopoly to fifteen years, as their first patent had done, "the whole entire and only trade and traffic to the East Indies" was handed over to the adventurers "for-ever".

As a contrast to the princeliness of its terms, James was cautious enough to add a proviso, withdrawing all that he granted on three years' notice, if the Indian trade, as conducted by the Company, "should not prove profitable to the realm".

The merchant adventurers now felt themselves invincible. Their society had by no means been swamped by the aristocratic additions just made to it. Its character was little altered; the marked increase in the subscription for the sixth voyage was not borne by the nobles, who had, almost without exception, lent their names and influence merely, not their purses. They were charmed at being associated with so romantic and profitable a commerce. To be a freeman of the East India Company

[1] The charter is addressed to "our right trusty and right well-beloved cousins and councellors, Robert, Earl of Salisbury, our High Treasurer of England, Charles, Earl of Nottingham, our High Admiral of England, and Edward, Earl of Worcester, Master of our Horse; and our right trusty and well-beloved William, Lord Cavendish and our well-beloved servant, Sir Thomas Lake, Knight, one of the clerks of our signet and other knights and gentlemen".

was quite *à la mode*. Many of the first courtiers of the realm took pleasure in subscribing to the venerable and fantastic oath which solemnly bound them not to reveal "the secrets and privities of the said Company, which shall be given you in charge by the Governor or his deputie to conceale". Such secrets they swore to "heale and not bewraye".[1]

Now, when the beadle of the Company went on his rounds with his book, it was no paltry £11,000 rewarded his zealous exertions; no less a sum than £82,000 was subscribed for the sixth voyage. The Company, having regard to its recent lamentable experience with small and inferior craft, had already resolved to build ships of its own at a dock it had rented at Deptford. The unprecedented sum thus at their disposal justified the Committee in ordering the shipwrights to lay the timbers of what was designed to be the largest merchantman in the realm (in addition to a smaller ship), built after their own plans. Moreover, such a momentous event as her launching was thought well worthy of the royal presence and a royal celebration. For the launching of the new vessel, King James, accompanied by the Queen and the young Prince Henry, came down the Thames in the royal barge to the Deptford docks, 30th December, 1609. The names, the *Trade's Increase* and the *Peppercorn*, doubtless coined by

[1] Shakespeare's patron, the Earl of Southampton, sent in July, 1609, a brace of bucks to the brethren "to make merry withal in regard to their kindness in accepting him of their Company". The Governor nominated a Venison Committee, who agreed "upon a dinner to be provided for the whole Company at the Governor's house". What would one not give for a peep in at the revels!

the royal brain, were duly bestowed, the ceremony being followed by a mighty banquet, at which the dishes were of the then priceless China-ware. At the banquet's conclusion the King graciously called the Governor, Sir Thomas Smythe, to his side and "hung a greate chaine of golde and a medal about his necke with his owne handes".[1]

By April, 1610, the *Trade's Increase*, with Sir Henry Middleton in command as "General," sailed away with two other ships, laden with merchandise for the Indies. The vexations of the fleet began with Aden, where several of the merchants and seamen of the *Peppercorn* were detained. At Mocha, the *Trade's Increase* ran aground, and Middleton, on going ashore with several of his men and some cargo, was the victim of a treacherous attack by the natives. Several of the company's servants were slain, while their leader and the rest were captured and despatched to the Pasha at Sana.

While this outrage was proceeding a band of Turks attempted to lay hold of the *Darling*, which stood by her hapless sister ship in the harbour of Mocha. In this they did not succeed. But for nearly five months Sir Henry Middleton remained a prisoner at Sana, not making his escape until the spring. Once aboard the *Darling* again, he proceeded to retaliate by blocking the port of Mocha, capturing one ship from Diu and several others from

[1] The Company was constantly making gifts of curious workmanship to the King and the precocious Prince Henry. About this time its servants were ordered to reserve for royalty "all strange fowls and beasts" that came their way in the Indies (*Cal. State Papers*, 1609).

Malabar. As a result of these resolute measures the Shahbandar found it expedient to make overtures to Middleton for peace, offering compensation for all the goods seized at Mocha.

Middleton agreed, and although the money was not forthcoming, the *Trade's Increase* was got off the sands, and in August the Company's fleet left Mocha for Surat, in whose harbour it anchored.

But the Portuguese were waiting for Middleton; he soon found that not only was he prevented from landing men from the ships, but that none on shore could venture to reach him. On shore, even as he faced the situation, a little knot of his own countrymen and fellow-servants of the Company stood gazing wistfully at the splendid proportions of the *Trade's Increase*, powerless to communicate with her commander or with any of her sturdy consorts. This group consisted of Captain Sharpeigh and his companions, whom we have seen making their way overland to Surat after the wreck of the *Ascension* in 1609. Two years had slipped by in activity; the Portuguese were masters of Surat, and, under the circumstances, there seemed naught to do but fold their hands and await philosophically the turn of events.

Such a situation proved unendurable. The *Darling's* captain, seeing their plight, sent a boat to the shore. Instantly a Portuguese vessel tried to cut her off, and as if this were a signal the Englishmen promptly opened fire. The Portuguese ran aground and was captured by the Company's men, who effected a landing at Swally. A hot skirmish between the rival traders ensued, at the close of

which Middleton valiantly pushed his way through to the residence of the native Governor of Surat. He demanded a right to trade, and this right was provisionally accorded him.

But this did not satisfy the Company's commander, who wanted to establish a regular factory at Surat. But when he carried this into execution the local authorities became highly incensed. Middleton was ordered instantly to leave the neighbourhood; the discomfited traders saw fit to withdraw to their ships, while the exultant Portuguese lined the shore hailing the English "pirates" with a chorus of derisive laughter. The Company's men had, alas, parted with their goods to the native *banias*, and were not even allowed time to collect the price owing by their quasi-customers.

Thus failed the first attempt to get a foothold upon the Peninsula. The Company had been beaten off by a force which it was well within the power of its servants to subdue. Evil days these for the Ledger and the ways of peace. Trade was not to be won that way. The rising Dutch tyranny and the panic of the dwindling Portuguese made the time almost ripe for drawing the Sword.

Note to Chapter III.

Only a small portion of the early correspondence addressed to the Company by its captains and agents abroad now exists in the India Office archives. But after 1610 the documents become more numerous. As to the journals of the early voyages, most have perished; but some are to be found in an abridged form in *Purchas his Pilgrimes*, from which much of our knowledge of the proceedings in the East is derived. In 1830 an attempt was made to

collect all the "original correspondence from India, with collateral documents originating at any places between England and Japan," then extant. These dating between 1603 and 1708 were carefully bound, numbered and catalogued, and are known to-day as the *O. C. Records*. The first volume of these Letters, edited by Mr. F. C. Danvers, was published in 1896, and the series has since been continued by Mr. William Foster, of the India Office.

CHAPTER IV.

A Joyful Foothold at Surat.

THE Company had been in existence eleven years, yet possessed hardly more than the rudiments of factories in the Indies, while the Dutch boasted fully a dozen regularly established trading settlements, from most of which they had ejected the Spaniards and Portuguese.[1]

France, no longer restrained by Spain and the Pope, naturally looked jealously on these efforts of Englishmen and Dutchmen to exploit the East to their own advantage. In 1609 we learn that the subjects of Henri IV., "who had long aspired to make themselves strong by sea," took the oppor-

[1] "The English, at this time, could boast of no other properly established factory than that at Bantam, although they did carry on an uncertain trade in the Moluccas and at places in Sumatra; they were, however, overborne in most places by the Dutch, who appear not only to have had at their command greater resources for trade, but were also much superior to the English in those parts, both in the number of their vessels and in the strength of their forces."—Danvers, *Letters Received by the East India Company from its Servants in the East*, vol. i.

Writing in 1609, Sir Thomas Overbury had this to say of the rising Dutch power: "There belongs to that State 20,000 vessels of all sorts. So that if the Spaniards were entirely beaten out of those parts, the Kings of France and England would take as much pains to suppress as ever they did to raise them. For being our enemies, they are able to give us the law at sea; and eat us out of all trade, much more the French; having at this time three ships for our one, though none so good as our best."—*Tudor Tracts*.

tunity of a treaty made between James I. and the French King to "set on foot this invention, a society to trade into the East Indies," with a capital of 4,000,000 crowns. Becher, the English Ambassador at Paris, wrote in 1609 to Lord Salisbury that Dutch seamen were being "engaged at great pay and many of their ships bought". The States-General strongly remonstrated against this proceeding, and threatened to "board the French ships wherever they found them, and hang all Flemings found in them". This threat appears to have been effectual, and the project was abandoned. A little later, in 1614, the French again projected taking part in the East India trade, and accounts were current in London concerning ships and patents from King Louis, but this too ended lamely and nothing practical was effected for full half a century.

The Company always had before it the danger of attack by Spanish or Portuguese, and its captains and agents were put perpetually on their guard. But it never seems to have occurred to the Court of Committees that there was any danger to be apprehended from the Dutch, so that they were all the more astonished and chagrined at the failure to establish trade with the Moluccas, where the natives were so friendly to the English, and offered them every facility, but, owing to Dutch oppression, in vain.

It will be recalled that in the first voyage James Lancaster had established factories at Achin and Bantam. In the second voyage Sir Henry Middleton was instructed to endeavour to found a factory

on the island of Banda. He carried on some trade, but neither he nor his successor in the third voyage, Captain Keeling, was able to override the opposition of the Dutch and secure a foothold. In the instructions issued to the last-named, he was requested to establish, if possible, a factory at Aden, from whence he was to proceed to the Gulf of Cambay seeking a good harbour there "for the maintenance of a trade in those parts hereafter in safety from the danger of the Portuguese, or other enemies, endeavouring also to learn whether the King of Cambay or Surat, or any of his havens, be in subjection to the Portuguese, and what havens of his are not, together with the dangers and depths of the water there for passage, that by this certain notice and diligent inquiry (which we wish to be set down in writing for the Company's better information) whereby we may hereafter attempt further trade there, or otherwise desist".

In no fighting mood, therefore, was the Company—whatever their servants' views—but prudently inclined to keep out of the way of the once terrible and still dreaded Portuguese. In vain, as we have seen, did Captain Hawkins exert himself to obtain concessions from the Grand Mogul which would survive the displeasure of his European rivals, who had by their ships, arms and intrigues completely terrified the governors and petty rajahs of the coast.

In 1611 Anthony Hippon, in the *Globe*, sailed for the Coromandel (or Madras) coast with the object of settling a factory, if possible, at Pulicat, and sharing in the port-to-port trade which the Dutch

had lately built up there. The idea seems to have originated with a couple of Dutchmen named Floris and Antheunis, formerly in the Dutch service, who were charged with the management of the business. So far as Pulicat was concerned the scheme failed, but the captain of the *Globe*, resolved to land his factory somewhere, hit upon Pettapoli[1] farther up the coast, where he arrived on 18th August, 1611. This was the Company's first settlement in the Bay of Bengal. But although the reception from the local governor and the King of Golconda was friendly, yet the place proved to be a deadly swamp and the trade was small.

When the landing of certain factors and merchandise had thus taken place at Pettapoli, Captain Hippon set sail farther northward to the ancient port of Masulipatam,[2] which, forming "a coveted roadstead on the open coastline of Madras," was destined to be the theatre of much truculent rivalry between the European traders on the Coromandel coast. Here, on the last day of August, Hippon

[1] This factory of Pettapoli was dissolved in 1621, "a solitary merchant being left to collect country-cloths from the fever-stricken delta of the Kistna". A settlement was again made there in 1633, and this time the factory lasted till 1687, when it was finally given up by order of the Company.

[2] "Masulipatam (Fishtown) was the chief seaport of the Moslem kings of Golconda, who were not subdued by the Mogul Empire until 1687. It formed the outlet for the Golconda diamonds and rubies, for the marvels of textile industry which had developed under the fostering care of that luxurious inland court, and for the commoner 'white cloths' woven on the coast. The profits from their barter for the gold, camphor, benzoine ('benjamin') and spices of the Eastern Archipelago and Siam were immense."—Hunter.

and Floris landed and a factory was set up. A cargo of calicoes was duly obtained, whereupon the *Globe* departed for Bantam and the Far East to seek spices and pepper in exchange. Such were the beginnings of English trade on the east of the Indian peninsula. Two years later the Company's servants received from the Hindu King of Vijayanagar a firman to build a fort, written on a leaf of gold; a document which was preserved at Madras until its capture by the French in the next century.

Following hard upon their summary dismissal from Surat, Middleton, Hawkins and the rest, disinclined for their masters' sake to come to close quarters with the Dutch in the Spice Islands, directed their views to the establishment of a factory at Dabul. In this likewise they failed. In despair at not procuring a cargo, they went in for piracy and fierce retaliation upon the Turkish authorities for their treatment of them in the Red Sea. A couple of vessels hailing from Cochin were captured and some cloves, cinnamon, wax, bales of China silk and rice were taken out of them and removed to the *Trade's Increase.*

In the midst of a lively blockade of the Red Sea ports, they were joined by Captain John Saris, with four ships belonging to the Company's eighth voyage, who agreed to lend his forces for whatever the combined fleets undertook, if granted a third of the profits for the benefit of his particular set of subscribers. All this anomalous confusion between the various interests within the same body corporate could have but one issue. The rival commanders

took to quarrelling over the disposition of the hundred thousand pieces-of-eight which Middleton hoped to squeeze out of the Governor of Mocha for outrages upon the English fleet. Strife ran high between them; and in the end Saris in the *Clove* and Towerson in the *Hector* sailed away from the Red Sea, leaving Middleton and Downton to settle matters on their own account.

Powerless to obtain compensation from the Governor of Mocha, Middleton proceeded to make unceremonious levy on all the shipping he could lay his hands upon. On 16th August the *Trade's Increase* set sail in company with the *Peppercorn* for Tiku, where two others of the Company's ships were anchored. Perceiving but small prospect of trade at Tiku, Middleton changed ships with Downton, and straightway embarked in the *Peppercorn* for Bantam. He very soon discovered that the *Trade's Increase* was in a leaky condition; he had hardly got her out of Tiku when she ran aground—for the second time in her brief history. Again she was floated, and brought opposite Pulo Panjang, in Bantam Bay, where the cargo was taken out and stored on shore. The ship, which King James had christened and in which Sir Henry Middleton took such pride, was careened on the beach for repairs. During the process a renegade Spaniard formed a plot to burn her to the water's edge, and one night carried it successfully into execution—a catastrophe which is said to have so affected the doughty old commander, Sir Henry Middleton, that he sickened and died at Bantam, 24th May, 1613.

The many exploits of Middleton, the *doyen* of the Company's servants in the East, well deserve to be read:[1] the hardships he had suffered, the difficulties he had to contend with, the jealous cabals of which he had been the victim. Amongst the many insubordinations that prevailed Captain Nicholas Downton, one of the ablest commanders in the service, was not to be persuaded, despite the plots and schemes occasionally undertaken for that purpose, to abandon the respect and loyalty he owed the old sea-dog. Once when, in the Red Sea, Middleton wrote sharply to Downton for an alleged fault, the latter was filled "with admiration and grief".

"Sir," he replied, "I can write nothing so plain, nor with that sincerity, but malicious men, when they list, may make injurious construction; but evil come to me if I meant ill to Sir Henry Middleton or any part of the business. God be judge between him and me, if ever I deserved the least evil thought from him. I desire that he were so much himself, that he would neither be led nor carried by any injurious person to abuse an inseparable friend."

Wholly ignorant of the fate reserved for Middleton and the "mightie merchantman," the *Trade's Increase*, Downton resumed command of the *Peppercorn* and returned direct to England with a full cargo. Many times her timbers sprang a leak on the voyage —for she was but a jerry-built craft at best—but she finally got into the harbour of Waterford, 13th Sep-

[1] They will be found fully related in the *Letters received by the East India Company*, ably edited by Mr. William Foster, of the India Office —a series which it is sincerely to be hoped will be continued.

tember, 1613. Here the rudest of rude welcomes awaited Downton. He was visited by the sheriff, and arrested on a warrant from the Earl of Ormond, charged with committing piracy. But, for the present, the plots of his and Middleton's enemies miscarried; their victim was released, and in a few weeks' time was back in the Thames. Downton's proved zeal and endurance won him the applause and favour of the merchant adventurers, and the command of the first voyage under the Joint Stock system in the following year.

Meanwhile, each year the Company had been sending out a small fleet of ships to the East; it was now beginning, also, to receive communications from its agents and factors who, as we have seen, were being slowly distributed at various points east of Aden. Irregular as the receipt of these advices was, and incomplete and belated in themselves, they yet were a useful guide to the Company in equipping its new ventures.[1]

"We are in great hope to get good and peaceable trade at Cambay and Surat," writes Anthony Marlowe to the Company from Socotra, "where our ship, by God's grace, is to ride. Our cloth and lead, we hear, will sell well there; our iron not so well as at Aden; that indigo we shall have good store at reasonable rates, and also calicoes and musk, and at Dabul good pepper, so as I hope in God the *Hector*

[1] All letters to and from the Company and other material writings "were ordered to be registered, and one Francis Sadler was especially appointed to that office".—*Calendar of State Papers*, East Indies, 1609.

shall make her voyage at those places and establish a trade there, to the benefit of your worships and the good of our country."

For Captain Keeling, Marlowe has many words of praise. "His wisdom, language and carriage is such as I fear we shall have great want of at Surat in the first settling of our trade." Of some of the other servants of the Company Marlowe is not so enthusiastic, and he does not spare his opinion of their characters. In a subsequent letter, we are brought face to face with a very pretty quarrel between Hippon, the master of the *Dragon*, and his mate, William Tavernour, in which Hawkins tries to act as peacemaker, but is foiled by the bloodthirsty Matthew Mullinux, master of the *Hector*, who had himself a private grudge against the said Tavernour, or as is writ here: "a poniard in pickle for the space of six months".

"And not contented with this, [he] afterwards came up upon the deck and there before the boatswain and certain of us, did most unchristianlike speak these words: that if he might but live to have the opportunity to kill the said Tavernour he would think it to be the happiest day that ever he saw in his life, and it were but with a knife."

There seems to have been a surfeit of these internecine brawls for some time to come, and indeed stories of dissensions amongst the servants of the Company in the East are plentifully sprinkled throughout its history, both in this century and the next. Of hints for trade the Company's agents are profuse in this growing correspondence.

"There is an excellent linen," writes one of them, "made at Cape Comorin, and may be brought hither from Cochin in great abundance, if the Portugals would be quiet men. It is about two yards broad or better and very strong cloth and is called Cacha de Comoree. It would certainly sell well in England for sheeting." Here we see the genesis of the calico trade.

The Company is informed that "if Moorish girdles, Turks and cloaks will yield any profit, I pray give advice ; they are here in abundance and the great chief merchandise. There is also a market for cloth of all kinds of light and pleasing colours, pleasing to the eye, as Venice reds, stamels, some few scarlets for presents and also to sell to great men, popinjay greens of the brightest dye, cinnamon colours, light dove colours, peach colours, silver colours, light yellows with others like, but no dark or sad colours, for here they are not vendible. Those of the last voyage are yet upon our hands and will not be sold for the monies that they cost in England."

Thenceforward, it is to be supposed, the Company bought no more of the "suitings of the Puritans," then growing to be the vogue at home.

"Of new drinking glasses, trenchers for sweetmeats, but especially looking-glasses of all sorts and different prices (but not small baubles), some reasonable quantity would be sold to good profit, and I verily suppose that some fair large looking-glass would be highly accepted of this king, for he affects not the value in anything, but rarity in everything, insomuch that some pretty newfangled toys would

give him high content, though their value were small, for he wants no worldly wealth or riches, possessing an inestimable treasury and is, it is thought, herein far exceeding the Great Turk."

Throughout all their reports and epistles the captains and factors appear above all anxious to establish themselves on the mainland, and express much indignation at the conduct of Macarab Khan, the Mogul's vizier, at his juggling with their hopes.

"If it please God we attain Surat (sighs one of the factors) how comfortable it will be to those there, beneficial to the trade and commodious to your Worship." Jostled aside—tormented by the Dutch in the eastern archipelago and by the Turks in the Red Sea, what wonder that the Company and its servants now longed to displace the Portuguese in India itself.

At home the Company had despatched in 1612 as its tenth expedition, three vessels. They comprised the stout old *Dragon*, commanded by Captain Thomas Best; the *Solomon*, *alias* the *James*, and the *Hoseander*. Was the new effort of Best and Kerridge, one of his supercargoes, to establish a factory at Surat to be more successful than that of Middleton in 1610?

While the *Solomon* was forthwith ordered elsewhere in search of trade, Best with the other two vessels reached Swally, near the mouth of the Surat river, early in the month of September, 1612. Here Kerridge, disembarking with several companions, was well received by the native merchants and inhabitants, although gaining the disapprobation of the

Portuguese. He obtained permission to land some broadcloths, lead, iron and quicksilver, procuring in exchange for these such Surat merchandise as the Company had recommended him to acquire as suitable for the purchase of pepper and spices at Achin and Bantam.

In the midst of these agreeable transactions the Portuguese swooped down upon the Company's men, with four ships mounting 124 guns, besides a large flotilla of small native galleys. As they advanced, thinking to cut him off and board him, Captain Best perceived, with the intuition of the trained mariner, the weakness of their formation. He called out to Captain Pettie, of the *Hoseander*, to follow him, and, singling out the two largest of the Portuguese vessels, prepared to dash straight for them, his gunners, half-naked, standing ready and alert for the word of command which should begin the fray.

But to Best's confusion the *Hoseander* budged not a rod, being gripped fast by her anchors. In this predicament there was nothing for it—Best must close with the enemy single-handed. Placing his *Red Dragon* between the Portuguese admiral and vice-admiral the Company's commander gave orders to the gunners, and the battle commenced by the firing of a double broadside which "well-peppered" the enemy, who responded by splintering the Englishman's mainmast and sinking his long-boat.

"Having exchanged some forty great shot of each side," reports an eye-witness of the battle to the Company, "the night being come they anchored in sight of each other and the next morning our ships

weighed again and began their fight again, which continued some three hours, in which time they drove three of their galleons on the sands. And so our ships came to anchor, and in the afternoon weighed anchor, in which time the flood being come the galleons with the help of the frigates were afloat again."

Yet there was to be more and fiercer fighting against even greater odds before the Portuguese had had their fill of the English off Swally. After an attempt on their part to set fire to the *Hoseander* by means of a fireship, which utterly failed and cost the Portuguese 100 lives, the Company's ships sailed away on the 1st of December, thinking to draw the enemy after them. But not succeeding in this, Best anchored at Moha to await their pleasure. It was not until the 22nd of December that the enemy bore up, having been strengthened by ships and men from Diu. The shores were lined with spectators to see Best gallantly front them with his two ships' colours flying.

This time, it seemed as if Best and his men were doomed, yet to the astonishment not merely of the natives and Portuguese, but of the Company's servants themselves, they were victorious in this engagement. On the following day, at the close of another battle, the enemy, dazed and staggering from so much fighting and bloodshed, abruptly turned and fled, trailing their wrecked flotilla behind them. Nothing can convey a better idea of the overwhelming superiority of the Company's gunners and ordnance, as well as of the matchless audacity of

their onslaught, than the fact of their having lost but three slain, while the Portuguese list of killed was upwards of three hundred. Not only this, but Best's two ships were still in good condition.

On the 27th of December, the *Dragon* and the *Hoseander* returned triumphantly to Surat, where a number of the Company's factors and supercargoes were, as may be imagined, anxiously awaiting them. It was felt by most, on hearing the good news, that the promised firman of the Great Mogul would not be long delayed, but Best, worn out with fighting, was by no means so sanguine, and ordered Aldworth and the other factors to repair on board the fleet at once, with such merchandise as they had. But Aldworth, even after most of the others had given in to the "General's" views, insisted that Best's victory over the Portuguese had removed the opposition of the Mogul, who would surely despatch his firman. This was corroborated by Kerridge, who had gone to Agra to deliver a letter from King James to the Mogul. But Best had no relish for Aldworth's stubbornness, as he called it, and summoned a council "and so required the said Thomas Aldworth to come on board, which he again refused to do, for that he heard certainly the firman was coming".

Aldworth's confidence was rewarded, for just as Best was about to depart, Jehangir's decree, granting the Company a factory at Surat and at three other places about the Gulf of Cambay, arrived, bearing joy to the bosoms of the English traders.

At Agra, it appeared from Kerridge's account,

he had been admitted to the monarch's chamber, where Jehangir "sat on his bed newly risen from sleep". In his first letters Kerridge complains of a chilly reception and attributes it to his coming empty-handed. "No other treatment," he says, "is to be expected without continual gifts both to the King and others."[1]

The character of Jehangir was described by Kerridge as "extremely proud and covetous," taking himself "to be the greatest monarch in the world," yet a "drunkard" and "given over to vice". The Mogul, however, was very fond of music, and revelled in Robert Trulley's cornet, though virginals were not esteemed, "perhaps because the player was not sufficiently expert," and "it is thought Lawes died with conceit at the King's indifference". Nevertheless, on the whole, Jehangir behaved civilly to the Company's envoy, whose success in obtaining an audience was quickly followed up by Aldworth

[1] "Something or other though not worth two shillings must be presented every eight days," afterwards wrote the chief factor at Ajmir. Anything uncommon delighted the Great Mogul, however small its value. Gloves, caps, purses, curious pictures, knives, striking clocks, or silk stockings for his women, were among the articles desired at court, and the factor asked "if you have a jack to roast meat on, I think he would like it, or any toy of new invention". The Governor of Surat's list of "particulars desired" included two suits of armour, swords, mastiffs, greyhounds, spaniels and little dogs. Edwards presented a portrait of Sir Thos. Smythe to the Mogul, "which," writes the lieger, "he esteemed so well for the workmanship, that the day after he sent for all his painters in public to see the same, who did admire it and confessed that none of them could anything near imitate the same, which makes him prize it above all the rest, and esteem it for a jewel". The Company was advised to send pictures "well wrought, those of France, Germany, Flanders, etc., being fittest for the purpose".

in sending William Edwards, who took with him from Surat "great presents," including portraits of King James and his Queen and "one that will content the Mogul above all, the picture of Tamberlane from whence he derives himself". At last, then, the coveted firman "for kind usage of the English, free trade and so forth," was gained, Edwards remaining in Agra as "lieger" or ambassador, "which will be needful among this inconstant people".[1]

By the terms of the firman a duty on imports of 3½ per cent. was to be exacted; but on the other hand no damages were to be claimed for Sir Henry Middleton's piratical exploits, and the Company's factories were to be protected by law in event of any calamity overtaking its servants.

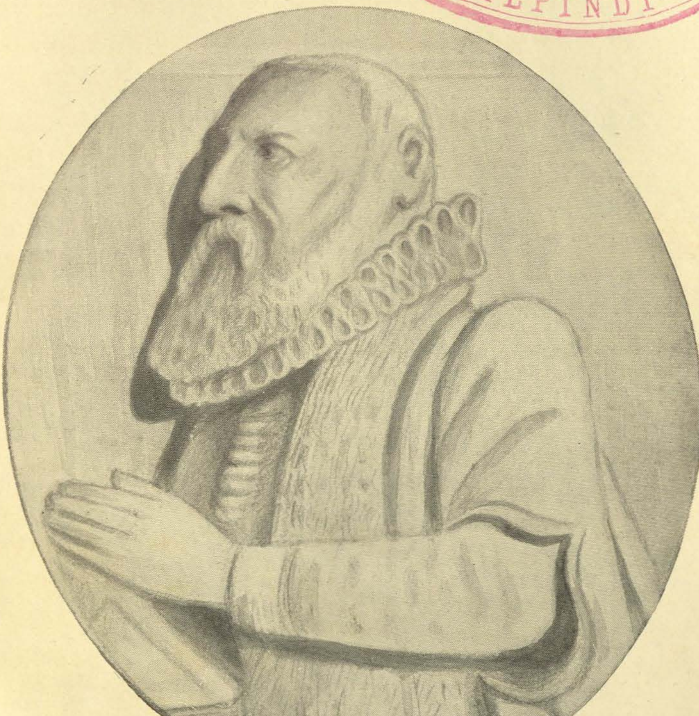
To Aldworth undoubtedly belongs the credit of having negotiated this concession, but it is doubtful if it would ever have received the Imperial sanction had it not been for Best's victory. Even when he had the document in his hands the conqueror was diffident and could hardly believe the good news. He was "doubtful whether it was the King's firman or not, and being resolved would not receive it until some of the chief of the city should bring it down unto him to Swally, which in fine they did. And the very day following the receipt of it, being the 14th, the galleons were again in sight, but came not near to proffer fight. Notwithstanding, the general resolved not to make any longer stay there, but took in such goods as were ready and landed the rest of the cloth, quicksilver and vermilion, all the

[1] *Cal. State Papers*, East Indies, 1513-1616.

elephants' teeth and some 1,200 bars of lead, carrying the rest along with him, as also all the pieces-of-eight and iron, and so the 18th present departed."

In such manner did the Company gain at last a certain foothold in the Mogul Empire. The factors stationed at the new post reported that Surat was the best situation in India to vend English goods, particularly broadcloths, kersies, quicksilver, lead and vermilion, to be exchanged for indigo, calicoes, cotton yarn and drugs, and added a list of such goods as might annually be disposed of there. They requested the merchant adventurers in London to send them some 4,000 pieces of broadcloth, sword-blades, knives and looking-glasses. They hinted that toys and English bull-dogs should be sent as presents. But the new trade, they were careful to explain, could only be protected by stationing five or six ships in the river at Surat to defend the factory and its occupants against the Portuguese.

On his return home Best was summoned to Philpot Lane to give a detailed account of his exploits, and was considered by the Court to have "deserved extraordinarily well". Yet his "great private trade," whereby he had enriched himself, caused some dissatisfaction, and the Governor, Sir Thomas Smythe, while admitting that no one could be a fitter commander than Best, thought that "Captain Keeling was far before him for merchandise, and so should command at Surat". But this did not satisfy the victor of Swally. Unless he were allowed private trade he refused to make another voyage for the Company, and finally insisted on an investigation



RICHARD STAPER.

From the Effigy in St. Helen's Church, Bishopsgate.

into his conduct. The upshot was that the Company was "content to remit all that is past and let these things die, which should not have been ripped up had he not called them in question himself".[1]

The various inconveniences to the Company from the separate classes of adventurers being enabled to fit out equipments on their own particular portions of stock finally evoked a change in the constitution of the Company. In 1612 it was resolved that in future the trade should be carried on by means of a Joint Stock only, and on the basis of this resolution the then prodigious sum of £429,000 was subscribed. Although portions of this capital were applied to the fitting out of four voyages, the general instructions to the commanders were given in the name and by the authority of the Governor, Deputy-Governor and committees of the Company of Merchants of London trading to the East Indies.

The whole commerce of the Company was now a joint concern, and the embarrassing principle of trading on separate ventures came to an end. Experience had amply demonstrated that detached

[1] *Cal. of State Papers*, East Indies, 1615. In October, 1617, the question arose of a chief commander at Bantam. The directors, after discussing the relative merits of Sir Richard Hawkins, Sir Thomas Dale and others, "requested the Governor to confer with Best as the fittest of all". Best accepted, and agreed to sail in the *Dragon*, but soon afterwards he was charged with appointing his son as a master's mate and other matters; and, having refused to sign a bond for £5,000 to perform the articles agreed upon, was dismissed the Company's service. Although the quarrel was afterwards adjusted, Best transferred his services to the Royal Navy, became senior officer in the Downs, and died (1638) Master of Trinity House.

equipments exposed the whole trade to danger in the East, in their efforts to establish trade. The first twelve voyages were, therefore, regarded in the light of an experiment to establish a solid commerce between England and India.[1]

[1] Of the twelve " Separate Voyages "—

" The First," 1601, under James Lancaster, consisted of the *Red Dragon*, *Hector*, *Ascension*, *Susan* and *Guift;*

" The Second," 1604, under Henry Middleton, consisted of the *Red Dragon*, *Hector*, *Ascension* and *Susan;*

" The Third," 1607, under Keeling, consisted of the *Red Dragon*, *Hector* and *Consent;* and William Hawkins, who commanded the *Hector*, left her at Surat and proceeded to Agra;

" The Fourth," 1608, under Sharpeigh, consisted of the *Ascension* and *Union;*

"The Fifth," 1609, was under David Middleton, in the *Expedition*, the only ship sent;

" The Sixth," 1610, under Sir Henry Middleton, consisted of the *Trade's Increase*, the *Peppercorn*, commanded by Nicholas Downton, and the *Darling;*

" The Seventh," 1611, was under Anthony Hippon in the *Globe*, the only ship sent;

" The Eighth," 1611, under John Saris, consisted of the *Clover*, *Hector* and *Thomas;*

" The Ninth," 1612, was under Edmund Marlowe in the *James* (James I.), detached from the " Tenth Voyage ".

" The Tenth," 1612, under Thomas Best, consisted of the *Hoseander*, *Solomon* (*i.e.*, James I. again) and *Red Dragon*.

" The Eleventh," 1612, under Best in the *Solomon*, detached from the " Tenth Voyage," and

" The Twelfth," also in 1612, was under Christopher Newport in the *Expedition*, which was commissioned chiefly to carry Sir Robert Shirley (brother of Sir Anthony), Ambassador from Shah Abbas to King James I., back to Persia, where he died in 1628.

Of the " Joint Stock Voyages " " The First," 1614, under Downton, consisted of the *New Year's Gift*, *Merchant Hope*, *Hector* and *Solomon*, and is the only one on the Joint Stock account of any general interest. The fleet which sailed in January, 1615, under Keeling, took out Sir Thomas Roe on board the *Lion*, as ambassador from James I. to the " Court of the Great Mogul " (Jehangir, 1605

Upon such terms the period known as the first Joint Stock was entered upon, which comprised four voyages between the years 1613 and 1616. The purchase, repair and equipment of vessels during these four years amounted to £272,544, which, with the stock and cargoes, made up the total sum raised amongst the members at the beginning of the period, *viz.*, £429,000.

Under this new system, Captain Downton was given command of the fleet, in the Company's merchantman, the *New Year's Gift*, thus named because it had been launched on the 1st of January. It was an armed ship of 550 tons, and with it went three other vessels. Downton went equipped with legal as well as military implements. King James made him master of the lives and liberties of the crews, and empowered him to use martial law in cases of insubordination.

"We are not ignorant," said the monarch, in the royal commission which he vouchsafed to the Company's commander, "of the emulation and envy which

to 1627) at Agra. Another, under Benjamin Joseph, consisting of the *Charles*, *Unicorn*, *Globe*, *Swan* and *Rose*, sailed in February, 1616, with Edward Terry on board the *Charles*, as "chaplain to the Rt. Hon. Sir Thomas Roe, Knt.". William Baffin served in the fleet consisting of the *London*, *Hart*, *Roebuck* and *Eagle*, which sailed in February, 1620, under Shillinge. The latter was killed in an encounter with the Portuguese fleet in January, 1621, off Ras Jask, and was buried near the town of Jask; while Baffin died in January, 1622, of a wound received at the siege of a Portuguese port on the island of Kishm, where he lies buried. John Davis, who sailed as pilot on board the *Tiger* in Sir Edward Michelbourne's independent voyage in 1604, was slain in December, 1625, in an encounter with a Japanese junk in the Straits of Malacca, and there found a watery grave within sight of the island of Bintang.—*First Letter Book*; Introduction, p. xiv.

doth accompany the discovery of countries and trade, and of the quarrels and contentions which do many times fall out between the subjects of divers princes when they meet the one with the other in foreign and far remote countries in prosecuting the course of their discoveries." Consequently, Captain Downton was warned to be careful not to stir up bad blood amongst the nations, but if he should be by the Company's rivals unjustly provoked he was at liberty to retaliate, but not to keep to himself any spoils he might take, which were to be rendered account of, as by ancient usage, to the King.

Before Downton could reach his destination, the chief energies of the Company's agents in India appear to have been bent upon forming a series of exchanges between the west coast and the factory at Bantam. The little band of servants at the new factory at Surat, headed by the redoubtable Aldworth, gave it as their opinion not only that sales of English goods could be effected at this port, but that they might be pushed on to the inland markets, and the adjoining seaports. Aldworth stated that in his journey to Ahmedabad he had passed through the cities of Baroche and Baroda, and had discovered that cotton, yarn and "baftees" could be bought cheaper from the manufacturers in that country than at Surat. At Ahmedabad he was able to buy indigo at a low rate, but in order to establish such a trade a capital of from £12,000 to £15,000 was required to be constantly in the hands of the factor. It was thought at Surat that it would be expedient to fix a resident at the Mogul's Court at

Agra to solicit the protection of that monarch and his ministers.

Downton arrived at Surat, 15th October, 1614, to find the attitude of the Portuguese towards the English more than ever hostile. At the same time trouble impended between the Portuguese and the Nawab of Surat. In order to demolish all opposition at one blow, the former collected their total naval force at Goa for a descent upon both natives and newcomers at Surat. Their force consisted of six large galleons, several smaller vessels and sixty native barges or "frigates," as they were called, the whole carrying 134 guns and manned by 2,600 Europeans and 6,000 natives. To meet this fleet, Downton had but his four ships (and three or four Indian-built vessels, called "galivats"), manned altogether with less than 600 men. The appearance of the Portuguese was the signal for fright and submission on the part of the Nawab; but his suit was contemptuously spurned by the Viceroy of Goa, who on 20th January advanced upon the Company's little fleet. He did not attempt to force the northern entrance of Swally Hole,[1] where the English lay, which would have necessitated an approach singly, but sent on a squadron of the native "frigates" to cross the shoal, surround and attack the *Hope* (the smallest of the English ships), and board her. But in this they were foiled after a severe conflict. Numbers of the boarders were slain and drowned, and their frigates burnt to the water's edge. Again and again during the ensuing three weeks did the Portuguese make

[1] Now known as Sutherland Channel.

efforts to dislodge the English; but the dangerous fireships they launched were evaded by night and their onslaughts repulsed by day, and so at length, with a loss of 500 men, the Portuguese Viceroy, on the 13th of February, withdrew.

His withdrawal marked a triumph for the Company's men. Downton was received in state by the overjoyed Nawab, who presented him with his own sword, "the hilt of massive gold, and in lieu thereof," says Downton, "I returned him my suit, being sword, dagger, girdle and hangers, by me much esteemed of, and which made a great deal better show, though of less value".[1]

A week later Downton set out with his great fleet for Bantam. Just off the coast the enemy's fleet was again sighted approaching from the west. For three days the English were in momentary apprehension of an attack, but the Viceroy thought better of it, and on the 6th "bore up with the shore and gave over the hope of their fortunes by further following of us". Downton and his men reached Bantam on the 2nd of June, and a few weeks later (6th August) the heroic "General" succumbed to a disease which had already proved fatal to so many of his crew.[2]

[1] Downton to the Company, 7th March, 1615. The Mogul, as well as the Nawab of Surat, was delighted at the result of Downton's achievement; he "much applauded our people's resolution, saying his country was before them to do therein whatsoever ourselves desired," and spoke "very despitefully and reproachfully of the Portugals".—*Cal. of State Papers*, 1513-1619.

[2] Downton wrote in 1613, when half the ship's company were down with sickness, "He that escapes without disease from that stinking stew of the Chinese part of Bantam must be of strong constitution and body".

It now becomes necessary to refer to an attempt to extend the sphere of the Company's operations in other countries of the East.

In 1613 the Company received a letter from one William Adams at Firando, in Japan, which made upon the members a deep impression. Adams, it appeared, was a native of Gillingham, Kent, who at the age of twelve years (1574) was apprenticed to Nicholas Diggins, of Limehouse. At twenty-four he entered the Royal Navy, where he served as master and pilot, and subsequently the Company of Barbary Merchants. When the Dutch began to trade with India in 1598, Adams joined at Rotterdam a fleet of five ships in the capacity of pilot-major. Two years later his ship, the *Charity*, separated from the rest, and, with most of her crew sick or dead, reached the coast of Japan. Adams was forthwith carried before the Emperor and examined as to his country and reasons for leaving it. The Jesuits and Portuguese did their utmost to have him put to death, but although he suffered an incarceration of six weeks, he was eventually permitted to join his companions. Adams soon evinced his usefulness to the Emperor as a shipbuilder and pilot, and so rose in favour that an "estate like unto a lordship in England" was bestowed upon him, "with 80 or 90 husbandmen that be as his slaves or servants". In 1609 certain Dutch ships appeared in the port of Firando and obtained permission to set up a factory, and two years later, another vessel, through Adams's influence, also secured privileges of trade. It was then that Adams heard for the first time of the

establishment of the English Company and its traders in the East. Accordingly he at once endeavoured to communicate with his "unknown friends and countrymen". Under date of 23rd October, 1611, he writes: "Having so good occasion by hearing that certain merchants do lie in the Island of Java, although by name unknown, I have emboldened myself to write these few lines desiring the worshipful company, being unknown to me, to pardon my stoutness". He assured them that the reason of his writing was "first as conscience doth bind me with love to my countrymen and country". In this letter he specifies the commodities vendible in Japan, describes the country and people, who, he says, are "of good nature, courteous above measure and valiant in war. . . . There is not a land better governed by civic policy," and finally hopes to hear of his wife, children and friends in England. This letter reached the English factory at Bantam in the spring of 1612. Augustin Spalding, the agent, forwarded it at once to the Company.

But Adams's story had already reached England by way of the Dutch traders of 1609, and made the directors anxious to open a trade with Japan. The reader will recall that Captain Saris, who commanded a ship in the seventh voyage, sailed away out of the Red Sea in high dudgeon, leaving Sir Henry Middleton to obtain what redress he might at the hands of the Moors. Saris directed his course eastward, past the Moluccas and the Philippines, and reached the port of Firando with the *Clove*, 12th June, 1613. Sir Thomas Smythe, the Com-

pany's Governor, had sent a letter to Adams, apprising him that he might expect a ship from the Company, but at the time of Saris's coming Adams was absent from Firando. The Company's servants therefore could do nothing but wait for him, which they did from the 12th June till the 29th July. On the 7th of the following month Saris left for the Japanese Court, Adams accompanying him. Adams soon arranged a meeting with the Emperor, to whom gifts were duly presented, and who eventually granted the Company permission to set up a factory at the port of Firando.

When Saris returned from his successful mission he found that seven of his mariners had run away in his absence. They "stole away the skiffe and went for Langasque, and there took sanctuary in the papist churches and weare secretly convayed away for the Philippines by the Jesuits; but," adds Cocks, "the skiffe we recovered again".[1]

Adams agreed to enter the Company's service at a salary of £100 a year.[2] He continued to

[1] *Diary of Richard Cocks*, edited by Sir E. M. Thompson (Hakluyt Society), 1883.

[2] "Mr. Adams is now entertayned into your Warships services for a cupell of yeares untill news com of the *Cloves* safe arivall in England, he being now at libertie to come for his country when he will. He wold not be entertayned under £100 str. a yeare. The Fleminges did what they could do to have gotten him from us which made him stand the more on his pointes. He alleged he was a pore man and that he had spent 14 yeares allready to no purpose and now would be loth to return for his country a beggar, giving the Worpll. Company humbly thanks for his liberty which he doth acknowledge came chiefly by means of the coming of this ship with his Majesties letters of England."—Cocks to the E. I. Company, *India Office Original Correspondence*, vol. i., No. 121.

enjoy the favour of the Emperor, who liked him so well as to prevent his return to his wife and child in England. Adams therefore provided himself with a wife and two children in Japan. He continued in the Company's service for three years, the last year making a successful voyage to Siam, and in 1617 and 1618 visiting Cochin China. A road in Yedo was named Pilot Street in his honour, and a native festival still annually commemorates the first Englishman who lived and prospered in Japan.[1]

But Japan was early a disappointment. "I am sorry," reported the chief factor, "I cannot instantly write your worships of much benefitt to be made in these parts; yet I saw both the Spaniard, Portugal and Duche look out very sharply about matters of trade." At present, however, "the Hollanders have soe many irons in the fire already with their wars in the Moluccas against the Spaniards".

Tempest Peacocke, another of the Company's factors, after making an investigation of the prospects of trade, concluded that the sale of English goods was uncertain, and recommended instead the opening of trade with Siam. In truth the pepper, lead and quicksilver, which had been brought from Bantam, was a drug in the market, and after a few seasons combatting the Dutch and Portuguese the Company's traders began to grow restless in the domains of the Mikado.

Peacocke's attempt to open up a trade on the mainland ended in disaster. All the traders—Eng-

[1] Hunter's *British India*; Rundall's *Memorials of Japon*.

lish, Dutch and Japanese—were cut to pieces, Peacocke himself among the number. This dreadful massacre was said to have been instigated by the "King of Cochin China," out of revenge for "a great quantity of false dollars bartered away by the Hollanders for commodities".

Up to 1616 there was only a promiscuous local trade between the Company and the great empire of China.[1] As we have seen, in 1596 Queen Elizabeth had sent a letter to the Emperor of China by the ill-fated expedition of Sir Robert Dudley, but of ship, crew or letter naught had ever been heard. At a later period the Dutch offered 100,000 ducats for permission to trade at Canton, but in vain. In 1614, Cocks, the Company's agent in Japan, informed his masters that the Chinese were much better disposed towards the English; and that if the King of England would write to the Emperor of China and send him a gift it would be graciously received. The Company debated on the proposal, and resolved to make Cocks the bearer of a letter from King James, which was obtained without difficulty.

In the following year Cocks reported that he had great hopes of trade with China, and had filled up "one of the blank letters from his Majesty" with the name and titles of the Chinese monarch, and despatched them with letters and presents to the mandarins, by way of Firando and Langasaki.

[1] There is evidence in October, 1615, of a considerable sale by the Company of China saucers, dishes, basins, roots, silks, rhubarb, etc. These had come *viâ* Macassar.—Sainsbury, *Cal. of State Papers*, 1513-1616.

In April, 1616, the Emperor of Japan, Iyéyasu, died, and, in consequence, the Company's trade was still further restricted. Several factories were forced to be withdrawn. "I am weary of the place," wrote the Company's agent, "and were it not for extraordinary hope to get trade into China would rather depart from hence to-night than tarry till the morning."

The interchange of commodities appears to have been a minor inducement to establish trade. It was notorious that the Spaniards and Portuguese had obtained enormous quantities of gold and silver from Japan in return for merchandise. The country's resources were popularly believed inexhaustible and the Company hoped that ample supply of specie might be obtained there which would relieve England from the embarrassing drain she then suffered.

But experience taught that the Japanese were fickle and also that the English were less fitted than the Dutch and Portuguese to supply their tastes. The oppression and piracies of the Dutch administered a further blow. This was followed by a curtailment on the part of the new ruler, Hidétada, of the privileges originally granted to the Company by his predecessor, Iyéyasu, Adams's patron. The new Emperor took measures to limit the exportation of the precious metals from his country.[1]

[1] This export of specie from Japan must have been huge, for even long after restrictive measures we learn from Kœmpfer the following:—

"Under this accumulation of adverse circumstances," says the author of *Memorials of Japon*, "it cannot be considered extraordinary that the adventure to Japan proved a total failure. Such was the case, after upwards of £40,000 had been uselessly expended. But though commercially unsuccessful, the English preserved their character in the Empire without impeachment. Worthy Captain Cocks and his associates retired from Japan in 1623, honoured by the esteem of the higher classes, blessed and regretted by the humble in condition."

The Dutch for above two and a half centuries maintained their position in Japan, but at what sacrifice of their credit and self-respect! The most galling conditions were imposed. Upon their expulsion from Firando, they were content to preserve the shadow of a once lucrative trade at Nagasaki, "subject to restrictions, physical and moral," to

Portuguese—In one year (1635) there was exported 100 tons of gold	£875,000
1636 Exported 2,350 chests of silver . . .	587,500
1637 " " " " " . . .	535,591
1638 " " " " " . . .	314,756
	£2,312,847
Dutch—One year, date not ascertained, 80 tons of gold	700,000
1,400 chests of silver	450,000
	£1,150,000
From 1611 to 1641, at average rate of 60 tons of gold per annum	15,000,000
Also 1,400 chests of silver, £450,000 . . .	13,500,000
Total sterling . £31.692.847 . .	£296,500,000

See Rundall's *Memorials of Japon.*

which Englishmen would hardly have submitted. Their trade, from the date of their removal from Firando up to 1850, was limited to two ships yearly, the united cargoes of which could not exceed in value £70,000. The profits were as limited as the trade was insignificant, owing to the oppressions and exportations of the native officials and merchants.

In Borneo the Company was carrying on an intermittent trade with Landak, Banjermassin, Sambas and Succadana, many diamonds being procured at these settlements. We may note that sales of diamonds by the Company were frequent in London, one "great diamond" fetching £535 in 1614. No wonder that Shakespeare's phrase, "As bountiful as the mines of India" came home with a fresh directness, or if the love-lorn Orlando's couplet,

From the East to Western Ind
No jewel is like Rosalind,

was to Jacobean play-goers a topical allusion.

CHAPTER V.

A Complication of Ambassadors.

DURING the reign of Elizabeth commercial intercourse between England and the "gaudy realme" of Persia had been begun, but the result of several voyages led to no regular trade. Privileges for trade had been granted to "all Christian people" by Shah Abbas in 1599, a copy of which edict had been forwarded to Salisbury by Sir Anthony Shirley, then resident at the Court of the Shah. His brother, Sir Robert Shirley, was afterwards, about 1607, accredited Persian Ambassador to Spain and England, to bring about an alliance between those countries and Persia.

Shirley wrote to the East India Company in 1613 to persuade it to undertake a regular trade to Persia, but nothing was done until an incident, occurring in the following year, led the Company first to try its fortune in that part of the world.[1]

We are told that a certain trader, Richard Steele by name, connected with the Levant Company, had journeyed to Aleppo, to recover a debt from a merchant of that Turkish port. The debtor fleeing to India, close at his heels through the Persian

1 F. C. Danvers, *Report on the India Office Records relating to Persia and the Persian Gulf.*

dominions Steele pursued him, arriving eventually at Surat. On the report he made to the factors of the Company there of the advantages likely to be derived from a trade to Persia, Kerridge agreed to send Steele and a factor named Crowther to Ispahan. At that time there was only a solitary Englishman at Ispahan, but this personage seems to have made up by his address, his capacity for intrigue and his commercial enterprise for the singular dearth of his compatriots. Sir Robert Shirley was one of the earliest examples of that race of political adventurers of which England has been, perhaps, more prolific in the course of the last three centuries than any other country in Europe.

With £150 in pocket with which to defray travelling expenses, and with letters of credit on Shirley at Ispahan, together with other letters to the Shah and to the Governors of the Provinces en route, Steele and Crowther set forth. They reached Jask without incident, and afterwards continued overland to the Persian capital, where they were well received. Steele continued his journey to Europe, leaving Crowther to return with the report to his chief at Surat. Shirley had satisfied him that in consequence of a war between the Persians and the Turks, a blockade having overtaken the export of Persian silks to Europe *viâ* Turkey, the present was the very best possible time for establishing a trade outlet through the Persian Gulf to Surat. Moreover, several kinds of English goods which had hitherto not been saleable in India (particularly broadcloths) were in great demand in

Persia. A small ship was therefore loaded with broadcloth, kersies, lead, tin, iron, quicksilver, vermilion, cutlery, glass and sword blades, with £2,000 in money, and despatched to Jask. What success this piece of enterprise met with we shall presently see.

In the meantime an event of the greatest importance in the present affairs of the Company, and to the future of its trade in India, had happened.

The difficulties of dealing satisfactorily with the Nawab of Surat, and the belief that the Jesuits interfered with their complete success at the Mogul's Court, induced the Company to have recourse to an Ambassador Extraordinary from King James to the Emperor.[1]

In November, 1613, Aldworth, writing from Ahmedabad, had expressed a hope that "there might a suffitient man be sent in your first shippes that may bee Resident in Agra withe the Kinge and sutch a one whose person may bread regard, for they here looke mutch after greate men"; while another factor, William Biddulph, wrote from Surat to the same effect. But even before these letters reached England the Company had learnt from Captain Best of the necessity of an ambassador of distinction at Agra.

That neither Kerridge nor Edwardes was fitted for the post of ambassador was only too evident. The last named had, according to general report,

[1] "To prevent any plottes that may be wrought by the Jesuits to circumvent our trade."—See W. Foster's *Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe*, Hakluyt Society, 1899.

"suffered blowes of the porters, base Peons, and been thrust out by them with much scorne by head and shoulders without seeking satisfaction and . . . carried himself with such complacency that hath bredd a low reputation of our nation."[1] In September, 1614, we find Sir Thomas Smythe proposing to the Company to employ Sir Thomas Roe at Agra, "he being a gentlemen of pregnant understanding, well spoken, learned, industrious, of a comely personage and one of whom they are in great hopes that he may work much good for the Company".

The Governor's suggestion at once produced an interesting discussion. Some of the merchant adventurers were for waiting upon the result of Downton's voyage, others held that "a meere merchant," such as William Edwardes, would serve their purpose and be more economical; while some were fearful that, when the King was consulted as to the Royal Ambassador, some courtier would be "putt upon them". But Roe's nomination silenced opposition; he was known to be a man both of excellent presence and ability, of good family, the favourite of the late lamented Prince Henry and an intrepid traveller on his own account. Roe was then in his thirty-fifth year, and sat in Parliament as member for Tamworth.

The offer made him by the East India Company was accepted. Roe bargained to receive £600 a year, one half of which he desired to invest in the Com-

[1] Roe's letter to Company, 24th January, 1616.

pany's stock,[1] the Company agreeing to defray the expenses in consideration that under their exclusive privileges they were to acquire such benefit as might result from this mission.

Roe's ship, the *Lion*, sailed in January. At Surat he was received by Kerridge and the Company's servants as hospitably as could be expected from men who were not quite clear in their minds about this mission extraordinary, and by no means convinced it did not imply their own displacement from some of the honours and privileges they had hitherto enjoyed. And, though with much tact and good sense, the Ambassador was not insensible to the dignity of his position in comparison with mere traders and ship captains, amongst whom, nevertheless, were some spirits hardly inferior in ability and diplomacy to Roe himself.[2]

Almost immediately on arrival at Surat, Roe launched his remonstrances at the head of the

[1] The sum of 500 marks was allowed him for the expenses of his outfit, and another 500 were advanced from his first year's salary, "to satisfie some debts which he oweth abroad," and £100 was lent for the purchase of plate for his table. The Company provided a chaplain and a chirurgeon at the cost of £50 and £24 per annum respectively. With this exception, Roe was to engage his own retinue at a cost ot £100 a year, with a grant of £30 towards the cost of their liveries. Unless the Mogul should make an allowance for other household expenses they were to be charged to the Company. Roe was forbidden all private trade for himself and to hinder it in others; also he was not allowed interference with the Company's factors in matters of merchandise.—Foster, *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe*, vol. i., p. vii.

[2] We shall have more to see of gentleman ambassadors to India hereafter. Roe was the first of the line. And we shall likewise see that the tough and common-sensed Company's traders were quite equal to the task, in all emergencies, of doing the Company's business.

offending Nawab. Unless the wrongs and violence which Downton's victory had only interrupted were reformed, the Nawab's word would be worthless in future. This being ineffectual he wrote again. "I come hither," he says, "not to beg, nor do, nor suffer injury; I serve a King that is able to revenge whatever is dared to be done against his subjects." After describing the injuries received, Roe declared he would seek no further friendship from him, but would desire justice of the Great Mogul. "I am better resolved to die upon an enemy, than to flatter him, and for such I give him notice to take me until your master hath done me justice."

Muhurrah Khan sought in vain to evade his cool and resolute adversary. Roe prepared to set out on his journey to Ajmir, and then the Nawab came to his senses, desiring Roe's friendship and humbly offering him "anything he would demand". A letter of rebuke at this juncture arrived from the Emperor Jehangir, together with a safe-conduct for the Englishman. At the same time Roe wrote to the Viceroy of Goa, giving him notice that King James was determined to protect his subjects from injuries offered them, and to that end had sent Roe to conclude a league with the Great Mogul for ever. In case of his refusal or silence, letters of reprisal were to be granted to make war upon him in all parts of the Indies, "when you shall not be able to look out of your ports, much less to attempt to injure us . . . your friend or enemy at your own choice."

No reply was sent, and Roe thereupon pronounced "open war against the Portugals in the

East Indies with fire and sword in the name of the King of England". Keeling, on his return from Surat, seized three Portuguese ships, "having first settled a factory at Calicut, which is thought will prove a matter of great moment".

Before setting out for the Mogul's Court at Ajmir, Roe found time to learn all the particulars of Kerridge's Persian project and vigorously to oppose it. Although rather mortified that the Ambassador's views did not coincide with their own, the Surat Council resolved not to hearken to such objections, but on the contrary to persevere in their attempt to enlarge the boundaries of the Company's trade in the West.

Early in January Roe presented himself before the Mogul in his character of Ambassador of the King of England. His visit created a sensation, to which it is probable the principal item amongst the presents he carried may have contributed. This was a large London-made coach, similar in its gilding and proportions to the Lord Mayor's state vehicle, familiar to us in modern times. The monarch expressed himself as delighted with the coach, but Roe soon found that the other gifts were not held in relatively high esteem. The reason was that the Company's agents had "spoilt" the Mogul and his ministers by the profusion with which they lavished ordinary presents, so that now "nothing less than valuable jewels would be deemed worthy of acceptance," which is notable in a land where precious stones are so plentiful. But the Ambassador was not long in discovering a rarity "which

they would more highly esteem than all the jewels in Cheapside". "Never," he writes to the Company, "were men more enamoured of red wine" than the Mogul and his son, and he accordingly advised that four or five handsome cases of Burgundy be sent. Meanwhile by the conviviality engendered by the few bottles he had with him, Roe induced the Mogul to listen to his representations concerning the trade of the English, and especially his complaints of the conduct of the Governors of Ahmedabad and Surat. So effectual were his remonstrances that the former was rebuked and the latter summarily dismissed from his post.

Roe desired to obtain something more stable than the ordinary firmans which Jehangir cast about in such abundance and were likely to be revoked without an instant's notice. He sought to negotiate a treaty granting definite privileges to the Company, which would be permanently binding on "the high and mightie King of India". In all his dealings with the Mogul and his officers and with the Portuguese Roe went on the principle that "the offensive is both the nobler and the safer part".[1] After long and heated interviews with the Mogul at Ajmir, and so much delay and intrigue that Roe more than once lost heart, the draft of a treaty between King James and Jehangir was successfully presented, by which the Company was to have liberty of trade and be allowed to establish factories in any part of the Mogul's Empire. Bengal, Scindy and Surat were

[1] Roe's Letter to the Company, 24th Nov., 1615.

especially mentioned in the treaty. It was furthermore arranged that the Company's agents were to be supplied with all kinds of provisions and vehicles by the people of the seaports, according to the ordinary charges ; that the merchants should be protected against any exactions or customs in all sales not exceeding sixteen reals-of-eight ; that all presents sent to the Mogul should be protected from being opened at the ports of entry and be forwarded to the English Ambassador at Court to be delivered according to his instructions. The goods of the Company should be rated within six days after landing and after payment of the stipulated duty might be forwarded free to any other English factory ; the goods purchased by the English in any part of India should have a free transit to the ports at which they were to be shipped ; the property of the Company's servants who might die in the Mogul's territory should be handed over to its agents. Furthermore, it was stipulated that all provisions necessary for the shipping should be exempt from duty. In case of any dispute a particular firman should be furnished, explaining and confirming the English privileges, copies of which were to be sent to the respective Mogul officers.

By a separate article it was agreed that the rate of customs on English imports should be fixed at $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. and 2 per cent. on reals-of-eight. Mutual assistance was to be given against the enemies of either of the contracting parties, and finally, that the Portuguese, at the desire of the King of England, should be included in this treaty,

six months being granted to the Viceroy of Goa to notify his adhesion to this arrangement. In the event of his refusal, the Portuguese, with whom King James was then coquetting in Europe, were to be regarded as enemies.

Thus the steed had been led to the water, but could he be made to drink? Albeit, on the 24th January, 1616, Roe came to some sort of understanding with Jehangir, by which his stipulations were verbally approved, with a half-promise of a formal subscription to follow.

Roe despatched, on the following day, an account of his success to the Company, pointing out the difficulties over which he had triumphed, such as the want of a competent interpreter and the proper appreciation by the Mogul and his Court of the dignity which ought to belong to the character of an ambassador, and concluding, with perhaps a ludicrous but eminently practical touch, by recommending the sending of a large assortment of all kinds of toys which would annually find a ready sale at the great native festival of Noroose, held in the month of March.

While Roe was at Ajmir, one of the Company's captains, Keeling, was arranging with the Zamorin to join forces, fight the Portuguese, and expel them from Cochin. On the conquest of the place it would be ceded to the English, who were to pay half the expenses of the expedition. But this plan was, as will be seen, to wait some time for fulfilment. At the same time, Keeling's good understanding with the local ruler was productive of trade, and he

deserves to be remembered in the annals of the Company as an active and zealous servant.

During the year 1616 reports were repeatedly arriving at Surat of the death of Jehangir, and, although they were each time proved false, yet they conspired to give additional insecurity to a situation which Kerridge and his associates had long recognised, and considerably discounted the achievements of Sir Thomas Roe. In truth, although the Mogul was destined to survive for more than a decade longer, yet, at this time, the political state of his empire was troubled, the administration relaxed and Jehangir's three sons were preparing for civil strife. Consequently, trade throughout the empire daily became more hazardous, and the transit of goods from one district to another exposed to depredations. At Surat, it is true, the evil effect of this state of things was less apparent than at the other factories at Brampore and Ahmedabad, which were on the point of being withdrawn.

These proceedings, when reported, inspired the Company at home with greater confidence in its idea of a Persian trade. If, it was argued, the Indian Empire suddenly burst out into a flame of war and our trade be checked or paralysed, we can at least turn to Persia as an outlet for our merchandise. Especially was this desirable from its servants' present inability to open any trade with the countries bordering upon the Ganges, which continued the exclusive possession of the Portuguese. Meanwhile vainly did Kerridge and the rest attempt to convert Sir Thomas Roe to their

view of the case. He persisted in holding that the idea of trade with the subjects of the Shah was ill-advised. He professed fear of the Portuguese power there, and even went so far as to write to Shah Abbas to explain that the ship the Company's enterprising factors at Surat had sent, had put in at Jask merely by accident. Such a proceeding on the Ambassador's part, when it came to the ears of Kerridge and his council, aroused resentment. They were offended at Sir Thomas's interference, they ridiculed his negotiations as worthless from a commercial standpoint, although perhaps interesting as a departure in international politics. What England really wanted in India, they said, was not a political diplomat, but a good business man. In return for their compliments Sir Thomas wrote home recommending that the agency at Surat be abolished and an entirely new plan of inland trade adopted. He had offered the Mogul 12,000 rupees per annum to secure exemptions from the payment of customs at Surat, which would thus put the port and the Company's transactions there entirely outside the power of the local authorities, so far as its traders were concerned, and enable them to land and convey into the interior towns as many goods as they pleased. This ingenious arrangement, which would have given the English an enormous advantage over the Portuguese, was not accepted. Were it otherwise, its success in suppressing rivalry would have been short-lived. For an accident occurred, trivial of itself, but fraught with unexpected consequences for the Company. All over the countries and islands

of the East, the Dutch had followed them: why should the English traders conceive themselves safe from their rivalry on the Indian peninsula? Yet when the tidings came of two Dutch ships being wrecked off Swally in July, 1617, and the survivors coming into Surat with most of her cargo for sale, the President did not instantly realise that English commerce was in danger.

Let us see what the Dutch had been doing elsewhere in the East. Under the leadership of a shrewd and forcible administrator, Van Coen, who had been appointed by the Dutch Company to the new post of Governor-General of the East Indies, they had succeeded in establishing themselves in such force and in such favour at Jaccatra, in the island of Java, that they were able to exercise a powerful influence either by means of their wealth, their superior shipping, their number or their intrigues over all the outlying archipelago. The English resorting, it must be confessed, to less vigorous or perhaps less systematic methods, were driven almost in a panic from island to island, only to encounter at each turn of their ship's prow, a broad-beamed grinning Dutch factor, warning them, in the name of his doughty superiors at Jaccatra, off the premises. Upon what principle the Dutch imagined themselves masters of the trade of the Spice Islands, considering the English as well as the Portuguese had preceded them thither, it would be futile to inquire, even from their latter-day historians. Had they come boldly out with a declaration that might was right—that they were prepared to make war

on all who combatted their claims to a monopoly, a great deal of lingering wretchedness, misunderstanding and inhumanity might have been avoided.[1] But the Dutch, who had the trade in hand, chose another and less open-handed course. They would seek to crush out competition, while still proclaiming the English their friends. To do otherwise, it is true, would have exposed the States-General in Europe to danger, inasmuch as their fellow-Protestants, the English, were their only allies. Their course lay, therefore, in flattering and parleying with King James at home and appearing to make common cause against the Portuguese, while at the same time engaged in crushing and bullying his subjects in the East. As early as 1611 "notorious injuries" committed by the Dutch upon the Company's men compelled them "to break silence and complain of their griefs" to the Lord Treasurer. Lord Salisbury thereupon wrote to the English

[1] Captain Lancaster, as we have seen, had as long ago as 1602 concluded a treaty of trade with the King of Achin, in Sumatra, and had also in the same year acquired similar privileges at Bantam in Java, where he had established a factory. In 1603 Captain Middleton had successfully traded for pepper at Amboyna, and was well received by the natives. For some years the station at Bantam was the emporium of English trade in the East, although an attempt appears to have been made to establish another distributing factory at Priaman in Sumatra. Then, again, we have noticed that in 1613-14 the great object of the agents in India was to form a series of exchanges between the west coast of the peninsula and the factory at Bantam, as well as to open a regular trade between this latter station and the Spice Islands, where the Dutch were doing their utmost to create a monopoly. These efforts of the English were met with the hostility of the Dutch, who did not scruple to employ every available means to drive them out of the market.

Ambassador at the Hague to lodge a remonstrance with the Dutch States-General, who were induced to despatch commissioners to London in March, 1613. On their arrival conferences took place, lasting two months, but nothing satisfactory resulted. Then the Dutch Ambassador suggested an amalgamation of interests—the two nations forming one joint stock: the Hollanders sharing in the trade at Surat and the Company in that of the Moluccas, in such manner "that no place may be overlayed". Although such a scheme would have ended in ruin for the English, yet King James imparted his "dislike to the Company refusing to join with the Dutch, if they should fall upon a joint stock". Commissioners, accordingly, were sent to Holland early in 1615, returning four months later to report that the Dutch had fifty-one ships in the East Indies, a stock of £900,000, and owed £400,000 at interest, which "is a great discouragement to their adventurers". Caron, the Dutch Ambassador in London, announced the basis of the Dutch offer, which was that £1,100,000 or £1,200,000 should be paid in by the combined companies. But the Company explained to the king the "inconveniences and impossibilities" of such a course.

At the same time, in August, 1615, the Dutch Ambassador was "thanked for his pains," and told plainly that the Company could not join his nation, but that it "desired to have good correspondence with them in the Indies".

Such a pious desire was, as we shall see, hardly

fulfilled by the traders of the two countries, whose quarrels even then had grown so great that, in the words of the Company's Bantam factor, "it hath bred a strangeness between them".

Two plucky English traders, Boyle and Cockayne, who were sent from Bantam to Amboyna, reported that, notwithstanding the invitation extended by the natives of this island and Banda to the English to open a regular trade with them, they had, after repeated efforts, been forced to abandon the enterprise. Their letters, as indeed the letters of the Company's servants everywhere east of Suez at that time, are full of indignant anger against their unreasonable and unfair rivals. "Those rascals the Dutch will not let us trade notwithstanding our rights here are equal to theirs," and "the broad-beamed Hollanders daily persecute us, making us long for vengeance," are samples of expressions which stirred in their masters, the Company, expectations of approaching trouble.

Cockayne had gone to Macassar and fixed a factory at that place, although it produced scarcely any other article than rice, in the hope that from its situation it might be made a central port at which to establish the spice trade. He had barely, however, got his house together before the Dutch appeared and endeavoured to excite the natives against the English. Without a sufficient force to chastise them, besides lacking the authority, the luckless trader retired, and, being driven from island to island and meeting Dutch opposition everywhere, at length reached Amboyna, where,

through the friendship of the natives, who were heartily sick of the Hollanders, he got possession of Cambello Castle in June, 1615. A Dutch force appeared and commanded him to surrender. Cockayne made an obstinate defence, but was ultimately compelled to return, sick at heart, to Macassar.

The Company was never from its beginning free from enemies at home. In 1615 a book entitled *The Trade's Increase* (no doubt after the Company's ill-starred ship) appeared, attacking the Company, some portion being "very near to treason and all the rest very dangerous". It was laid before the Archbishop of Canterbury and the law officers of the Crown, as a matter deserving condign punishment to be visited on the author. On the one hand Sir Dudley Diggs counselled that it should be met by a reply "in defence of the East India trade," but the Archbishop opined that it should rather be suffered to die than be suppressed, "which would cause many men to seek after it the more earnestly"—an anticipation of Milton's argument.

We read that at two meetings of the Company in November, 1614, there was a debate over the extraordinary proposal of the "King of Sumatra" to make an Englishwoman his Queen, on the understanding that for any children of the marriage he was prepared to grant eminent privileges, which would redound to the Company's advantage. Whereupon a gentleman of "honourable parentage"—perhaps a member of the Company—promptly offered his daughter, "a gentlewoman of most excellent parts for music, her needle and good dis-

course, as also very beautiful and personable". The merchants thought the idea most excellent: there was nothing here of a *mésalliance*. "The Kingdoms of Sumatra and Taprobane," said one, "are very eminent for antiquity amongst historiographers, and known to be very powerful for shipping." Besides, "it might be a meanes for the propagation of the gospel and very beneficial to this country by a settled trade there". Her father supported the proposition; offering to accompany his daughter and remain in Sumatra. When, however, the "learned fathers of the Church" were consulted they raised objections, which the sire, nothing daunted, met by various texts of Scripture displaying the lawfulness of the enterprise. These the Company found "to be very pregnant and good," and held that if King James's consent could be obtained "it would prove a very honourable action to this land". But the worthy father's sacrifice of his daughter upon the altar of trade was not fated to be; the Church firmly interposed, and he was obliged to seek another husband than the dusky Sumatran King.[1]

After Cockayne's and similar experiences it only remained to the factors at Bantam to confine their efforts there to extending the Company's trade in pepper. An experiment had been tried to open this trade at Jambi, but as this port was found to be overstocked already with Coromandel Coast goods it met with failure. Besides all this, the

[1] *Cal. of State Papers*, 1614. The monarch was really King only of Achin.

Japan and Siam ventures were, as we shall see, hardly more successful, and although Captain Best did, by the aid of a letter signed by King James, secure a new treaty with the King of Achin, it seemed likely to be of little value, in view of the fixed though underhanded determination of the Dutch to monopolise the spice trade, unless the English were to adopt a better policy.

Such was the unpromising situation of the Company in the East Indies at this time.[1] The summer of 1617 came and found their fortunes no farther advanced in the Spice Islands than an unstable footing in the islands of Pularoon and Poloway, which the natives, fearing their conquest by the Dutch, had agreed to cede to the milder English. On the peninsula of India the outlook, although not free from clouds, was brighter. Surat was become a flourishing station, and the Company's agents were not without hopes of making it still more profitable by ousting the Portuguese, whose wealth and influence were daily declining. It

[1] Hunter, consulting the Marine Records, gives the following table of the four voyages of the first Joint Stock, 1613-1616:—

Date of Voyage.	Capital.	Exported in Money.	Exported in Goods.	Cost of Ships and Victuals.	Ships sent Out.
	£	£	£	£	
1613	106,000	18,810	12,446	—	5
1614	107,000	13,942	23,000	272,544	9
1615	107,000	26,660	26,065	—	8
1616	109,000	52,087	16,506	—	7
	429,000	111,499	78,017	272,544	29

was while they were building on these hopes that the Company's powerful enemies, the Dutch, found them out, and by the stranding of two of their ships there in 1617 came to perceive the value and consequence of trade at Surat.

Having disposed of their salvaged goods to advantage, ten merchants remained behind to spy out and establish a regular trade. The rest of the Dutch officers and crew, delighted with their good fortune and hoping everything from their new factory, set out on horses and a-foot for the opposite side of the Peninsula, where a settlement had lately been founded at Masulipatam.

The chagrin of the English factors at this incident and its unexpected sequel may be imagined. No sooner had they got fairly established, than they were obliged to oppose themselves to a stronger and more implacable rival than the Portuguese. Nor was this the only source of discouragement. They found their new Persian trade threatened from an unforeseen quarter. The redoubtable Sir Robert Shirley had, since the arrival of the Company's agents in the Persian capital, been reflecting on his own private interests and had come to the conclusion (to which he was probably impelled by Portuguese bribes) that the projected arrangement between his own countrymen and the Shah would be to the detriment of his own fortune. Shirley was an adventurer and an opportunist; his information concerning political and mercantile affairs in England led him to doubt the permanency of the Company's tenure, as well as its willingness and

ability to reward him as handsomely as his efforts deserved. Thus he took advantage of one of the frequent familiar interviews with his master, Shah Abbas, to submit a scheme for a commercial alliance with Philip of Spain.

According to this arrangement, the subjects of Philip were to have the monopoly of the silk trade, and also to be permitted to fortify the sea-ports for the protection of their shipping and their factories. The monarch reluctantly assented, and the jubilant Shirley, seeing a vast subsidy for himself in prospect, departed for Europe in the notable character of Persian Ambassador, to seek audience with the King of Spain.

Connock, the Company's agent at Ispahan, instantly took alarm. He urged his masters at home to represent the matter to the King. "If," said he, "the Spanish-Portuguese enjoy exclusive possession of this trade they will thereby be rendered the most powerful European nation in the East Indies," and he wrote similarly to the factors at Surat. Nor did he end his remonstrances here, but actually penetrated into the Shah's presence, which he would probably not have been able to do but for the favourite Shirley's departure, and forcibly represented the unwisdom of allowing the Portuguese to get an upper hand in the commerce of his kingdom. He even went so far as to urge the instant seizure of the island of Ormuz from the Portuguese and its transfer to the English on favourable terms. While Abbas, regretting his former precipitation, hesitated, the Company's men

at Surat called in Sir Thomas Roe to their councils and converted him to the idea of Persian trade.[1] The trade which they had established at Jask promised to be highly profitable: it was in danger; and this was enough to cause Roe to lend his assistance to save it and the budding commerce.

It was among the last of Roe's acts in India. He finally procured the Mogul's acceptance of his treaty in September, 1618. This end accomplished, Roe left for Surat, where, after four months spent in loading the ships, he at length set sail for England, 17th February, 1619. On his reaching home, Roe was received with every mark of distinction. The Court of the East India Company, on hearing of his arrival, gave orders that a committee should conduct him on the following day to London, that all his expenses and those of his lady were to be defrayed. A dozen coaches were sent to meet them at the Tower Wharf and escort them to their own home. Ten days later Roe had audience of the King and gave an account of his embassy.

When a Spanish Ambassador duly arrived in

[1] A letter (Oct., 1617) to the factors at Surat is characteristic. He says: "The Company have imposed on me no such authority as that it should hinder their business, nor so shortened yours as that in your merchandising affairs you may not proceed roundly. I am not a man that stands upon idle points; whatsoever you do for the best, we all, I hope, consent to, and I do give all my power to you. He that resisted your speedy proceeding under colour of my name I have by my last made him see his error. For all other particulars as yet come into my mind, I have sent you here remembrances. For Persia those of the 8th to which I am constant. To the factories I have advised to receive their directions from you and to follow them; to further which and to despatch all I will not fail with all occasion."

Persia from Madrid to settle the contract devised by Shirley, he found the English factors there determined to oppose it, the Persian monarch lukewarm and a fleet of the Company's ships anchored before Jask for its defence. Moreover, Connock, the Company's agent at Ispahan, was now, thanks to Roe's co-operation, equal in official rank to the newcomer and authorised to treat with the Shah in the name of the King of England.

While, as the result of this resolute attitude, the Portuguese in their part of the East received a setback, elsewhere the Company's other enemy, the Dutch, were revelling in a series of outrages. They had actually the temerity, on finding they could not oust their rivals from the islands of Pularoon and Rosengin, to lay violent hands on the Company's ship, the *Swan*, and having corrupted the crew of another, the *Defence*, bore off both to a Dutch settlement. A couple of French vessels, courageous enough to attempt to seek trade at Bantam, shared the same fate. The English at the latter station and at Surat indignantly demanded the surrender of their property, thus filched in so high-handed a manner. The answer was that the ships would remain in the hands of the Dutch until the English had consented to surrender not merely their rights and claims on Pularoon, but on all the other Spice islands—in fact, to retire bag and baggage out of the far East.

Small wonder that Coen, observing the dismay and helplessness of the English, was delighted at the result of his policy of exclusion. He followed

it up by other strokes not less effective. With regard to the natives, the slightest symptoms of a natural resentment were put down with a brutal hand. Being fearful that his conduct might not be generally upheld at home, and might even give rise to international complications, with adroit statesmanship Coen hastened to forestall the complaints of the Company's servants, by alleging grievances on his own account. He drew up a preposterous list of charges against the unfortunate English traders; the Dutch directors copied them in the form of a memorial, which they presented in 1618 to King James. Being in possession, they declared, of a trade at Bantam, the English factors had endeavoured to instigate the Materam against them and had repeatedly assisted the natives, both of the Bandas and Moluccas, particularly at Amboyna, in violating their treaties with the Dutch. The petitioners, therefore, prayed for the King's interference with the London Company, to prevent its further encroachment on possessions ceded to them by the natives or conquered by them from the Spaniards.

To say that the directors of the Company were staggered by this piece of effrontery is to fall short of the truth. Nothing but their patriotic dread of embroiling England and Holland in war had restrained them from loudly proclaiming their injuries.

English grievances against the Dutch grew at length intolerable. The Company drew up two formal declarations of complaints, one for the King and the other for the Privy Council, against the

"efforts of the Hollanders to dispose them by force" out of many places in the East; of "their most outrageous behaviour as any mortal enemies could do;" of the "unjust seizure" of the Company's ships and their boast that "they will take from the English all the trade in the East Indies," they caring not for our King—"for St. George was now turned child".

Such charges rendered a Commission, with power to give satisfaction, imperative; the Dutch accordingly nominated ten envoys to come over and settle the dispute. They arrived in London in November, 1618, but soon made it evident that their credentials gave them little power. The King grew angry and the people began to flout them, crying out that "*brawn* is likely to be cheap as so many boors are come to town". The boorish Dutch were impelled to better manners, and negotiations, which lasted seven months, began at Merchant Taylors' Hall.[1]

Meanwhile pacific action was not calculated to allay the anger of the Company. It thirsted to inflict immediate retribution on its enemies, and took care that the command of its fleet for the season of 1618 was given to one who would stand no nonsense from the Dutch. Sir Thomas Dale sailed from England with six ships, with a special commission authorising him to fulfil military as well as civil func-

[1] This marks the beginning of the connection of Merchant Taylors' Hall with the East India Company. When a century later the old hall was burnt down, a new one was built at so great expense that the Merchant Taylors were obliged to hire it out to tenants. The Company held the larger meetings there from 1726 to 1767.

tions, and "in particular to prevent private traders and interlopers from disturbing the Company's commerce". On his arrival at Bantam he found the Dutch at Jaccatra at war with the Javanese. The ruler of Bantam, of whom the company held its factory, called upon Dale to lend his assistance against the Dutch in return for valuable concessions and the commercial exclusion of the Company's rivals. Dale consented, the treaty was signed and a body of English and natives, reinforced with ten heavy guns and twenty barrels of powder, marched against the Castle of Jaccatra, the Dutch stronghold. A surrender was made on 22nd January, 1619, and the Dutch garrison marched out.

But the conquest soon proved an empty one. The Javanese quarrelled amongst themselves, and the measures against their enemies were futile to prevent their return. Before many months had elapsed Coen had erected another stronghold close at hand, and laid the foundations of a settlement to which he gave the name of Batavia. Dale's exploit could not fail, however, to bring matters to a head in Europe. It was now either war or peace between the two nations, and, of course, neither nation dared hesitate, in the then state of European politics, which alternative to choose. But peace could only be effected by some species of arrangement which would guarantee, or seem to guarantee, the rights of the English to trade wherever they chose in all the vast domain formerly claimed as the Spanish monopoly. By the truce of Antwerp in 1609 King James had agreed to support the Dutch

traders in the East Indies. The Dutch Commissioners sitting in London now pointed out that this could not be achieved without erecting new forts and factories and maintaining a proper supply of men and armaments who would act on the direct authority of the Crown, as the Portuguese did—even as the Dutch did—with respect to their Government.

James hesitated at giving such open umbrage to Spain, from whom he was then hoping much, but at length, in the summer of 1619, a decision was arrived at satisfactory to both parties. There was to be a general amnesty for past misconduct, a restitution of ships and property, and in future the East India trade was to be free to both. This was a broad proposition and seemed satisfactory, but the treaty went on to say that it would only be free to the extent of the respective capital of the two parties and the amount paid for defence; it proceeded to specify that the pepper trade at Java was to be equally divided, that the English should have free trade at Pulicat on paying half the expense of the garrison, and one-third of the trade at the Moluccas and Banda. Each party was to furnish ten ships of war for mutual defence, which vessels were not to be employed for bringing cargoes to Europe, but solely in the local carrying trade; commissioners were to be appointed, to award each company its due; and finally, the operation of the arrangement was to be regulated by a Council of Defence stationed in the East Indies, composed of four members of each company. This entirely impracticable and disastrous compact, which from

the first pleased neither party, and was to prove fatal to the English, was fixed to endure for twenty years. When Coen first heard of it he ground his heel and gave full vent to his wrath.

Although the London Company could not but be aware that the terms were too loose and flexible and gave a strong advantage to the Dutch, placing more reliance on their sense of justice than their recent conduct warranted, yet it was too glad to be freed from the dead-weight of an intolerable situation to suspect how far it had been duped. A fleet loaded with merchandise greater than it had yet sent out to the East sailed the ensuing year. The investment for the voyage amounted to £62,490 in money and £28,508 in goods.[1]

The ship which carried out to the Indies the treaty of peace did not arrive until March, 1620, just in time to prevent bloodshed between Dutch and English in the Straits of Sunda, "for surely," wrote the master of the Company's fleet off Jaccatra, "if we had met before this news of peace had come it would have been a bloody proceeding".

In Japan the "unruly Hollanders" were even then proclaiming by sound of trumpet in Firando

[1] It had been ordered at a meeting of the Company that no copy of the terms be given to anybody "lest they be made known to the Portugues". Nor was any one permitted to take notes "to publish them abroad". Yet it seems to have been taken for granted at Court that the Company's position was now vastly improved, for we find none other than Prince Charles, begging the Company's leave to be enrolled a freeholder of the Company, and to adventure £6,000, a request which was "very willingly acceded to," although "some doubted that it was a matter pressed by some of his followers, who will seek to draw the benefit thereof unto themselves".

harbour open war against the English nation, "both by sea and land, with fire and sword, as our mortal enemies".

In the course of this year (16th May) William Adams, the first Anglo-Japanese and a firm friend of the Company, breathed his last. "I cannot but be sorrowful," wrote Cocks from Firando, "for the loss of such a man who was in such favour with two Emperors of Japan as never was any Christian in these parts of the world and might freely have entered and had speech with either when many Japan kings stood without." Adams' lordship was confirmed by the Emperor to his son, and half his property he himself left by will to his wife and daughter in England.[1]

The arrangement of 1619 had not long to wait for exposure. The ships had scarcely set sail[2] ere petitions for redress and heavy bills of damages began to pour in on London. The provisions of the treaty were violently attacked. Matters were made worse by the insufferable pretensions of the Dutch to sovereignty over all the places where they had erected their paltry fortifications. The English were merely to live in and carry on trade at those places, and to observe the Dutch laws at their peril. They could not even cut a stick of timber or nail down a

[1] Mary Adams had not only received a yearly allowance of £5 from the East India Company on her husband's account, but her husband was in the habit of sending her £50 or £60 a year, and he gave the Company many thanks for the care they had had of his poor wife in his absence.—*Court Minutes*, 1619.

[2] Only one of the fleet of ten ships returned, with an investment which produced £108,887; the others were detained in the East.

rafter. But this was not all. In building in the Bandas and Moluccas eighteen forts during a term of years as a protection against the Portuguese and the natives the Dutch had incurred an expense which they put down at £60,600 sterling. They now insisted that the English were bound to pay one half of this sum. The English not being at war with Philip III., and having no interest whatever in many of these islands, scouted the idea. It was soon clear that Coen's indignation was premature—that the Dutch Company had no intention of dealing fairly with the English, or of acting up to the spirit of the treaty of 1619.

Rumours of friction in the East were shortly followed by detailed narratives of injustice, even of high-handed outrage. At Jaccatra the Dutch would not permit the erection of any English factory unless upon a site which would make trade difficult, if not impossible. An Englishman who had the courage to deny the supreme authority of the Dutch at their precious hamlet of "Batavia" had been ordered a flogging. The English President and Council were so intimidated as hardly to dare lift up their voices in Coen's presence.

Who could doubt that the Company was on the eve of a catastrophe? It was obvious that in the present temper of the Dutch trouble was to be expected at both ends of the line—in Europe and in the Indies. To give an example at home: the Commissioners, Dutch as well as English, had agreed that restitution of the goods unlawfully appropriated by the former should be made, these



Photo: H. I. Jarman.

JOHN ELDRED.

From the Memorial Tablet in Great Saxham Church, Suffolk.

goods having been brought to Europe and sold. "Very well," said the Dutch envoys; "we will do as you say. We believe the principle of such restitution on our part is just and equitable. We will now discuss the question of freight charges, for bringing home your goods from the Indies."

This appeared reasonable, and well may the Company, now meeting in Crosby Hall, have breathed a sigh of relief. It was thought that the Dutch would not stint their demands—the highest freight due that had ever been given was £28 per last. The Dutch, always exacting, were expected to touch their maximum. But these gentry, it seemed, had been credited with too much moderation. They claimed £130 per last carriage, and 10 per cent. insurance, for the English merchandise they had stolen in the East! There was nothing for it; the conference was broken up in disgust. When the Commissioners again met a twelvemonth had passed. Matters had been in the interval proceeding so well for Dutch policy in the East that the Dutch members could well afford to be more reasonable. But that their agents had not the slightest intention of acting upon the spirit of the treaty in the East was too clearly proved. Every expedient was employed to exclude the English, not only from any participation in the trade, but from the islands or coasts in the southern seas. What rendered the situation more bitter was the false hopes which the Company had entertained of the Council of Defence. It had formed great plans only to see them dwindle away. For it had been

sanguine, with Dutch aid, of occupying Macao and of supplanting the Portuguese trade in China, the Philippines and Malacca. But, alas! a first expedition against Manilla had only resulted in the Dutch getting all the prizes, leaving the English ships barely enough to cover the expenses of equipment.

On the other hand, in spite of all these discouragements and humiliations, the industry, pluck and perseverance of the Company's servants in the East were so great in this season of 1622-23 that their employers had small reason to complain of failing profits. Compared with the Dutch gains the value was not large. Enough Indian produce was sold in a single day in Amsterdam to have made all the English Court of Directors rich men and to have exalted the stock of the Company. Yet five ships arrived in London towards the close of 1623 with pepper, cloves, mace and nutmegs to the value of £485,593. The sales of the Persian raw silk amounted to £97,000 more. There was another item even more noteworthy. The Dutch, after years of heated arguments and recrimination, were forced to disgorge the sum of £80,000 as compensation for the losses and injuries the Company had sustained prior to the treaty of 1619. Well as they could afford this trifle, it was not paid without grumbling; though they must have known that Coen's present policy would quickly reimburse them for their sacrifice.

Thus encouraged the Company was in high feather, and the spring of 1624 saw seven ships with

a stock of Spanish reals worth £68,720, and merchandise to the value of £17,345, departing for the East, none guessing of the fearful tragedy which had lately been enacted there; and which it will be our duty to set forth in the next chapter.

An incident was to give them pause much nearer home. The fleet had proceeded as far down the Thames as Tilbury when a wherry crossed its bows. A shot was fired from Tilbury fort and a trio of officers from the wherry boarded the Company's flagship. This time the enemy was not from without, but from within, the realm—the ships of the Company were arrested by order of the King!

CHAPTER VI.

The Dutch Smite the Company.

THE handle of the lever had been depressed in far-away Persia, whose effects were now felt so unexpectedly in the Thames. The Company's Ledger at home trembled under the weight of the Company's Sword overseas.

In 1620 we left two of the Company's ships in the Persian Gulf. Attempting to enter the port of Jask they found it blockaded by a large Portuguese fleet, under Admiral Ruy Frere. The impossibility of breaking through the barrier being apparent, the Company's two ships, the *Hart* and the *Eagle*, sailed for Surat for reinforcements, there luckily finding the *London* and *Roebuck* in port. They returned to Jask, cut their way with great loss through the enemy and entered the harbour. But the action was indecisive ; it was speedily renewed, and although the Company's force, in the course of a bloody combat at close quarters, lost its able commander, Captain Shilling, yet it won the day. With the retirement of the crestfallen Portuguese to Ormuz the reputation of the English in Persia took an upward bound. Even Sir Robert Shirley made haste to congratulate his countrymen.

But there was one consequence, although inevitably arising out of the situation, which the Company's

traders seemingly had not bargained for. The Portuguese had, prior to the Jask incident, thrown off the mask; they had openly quarrelled with the Shah and declared their intention of trading, in spite of the failure of Shirley's treaty, or of any arrangement his Persian majesty might make. The Shah, with his forces engaged elsewhere, and so unable to retaliate, had been obliged to overlook the proud bearing of the traders from Lisbon. The English victory altered this aspect of affairs; it was certain their arms would be called upon to chastise the Portuguese. The summons came early. Monnox, the Company's agent at Ispahan, had sent a caravan from Ispahan to Jask with several hundred bales of silk. On the journey it was stopped at Mogustan by the Khan of Shiras, the chief sufferer from the Portuguese, who refused to allow the Company's caravan to proceed unless the English consented to assist him to fight the Portuguese. Some parley ensued, and eventually the Khan accompanied the caravan to Jask, where a consultation with the Company's factors ensued. Indeed, the Khan was obdurate and the English saw no other way of proceeding with their cargoes, although not unaware of the possible diplomatic complications which might ensue from such a formal alliance for offence and defence with the warlike Persian ruler.

Of the numerous Portuguese settlements established by Albuquerque in the sixteenth century, Ormuz alone remained. After the lapse of generations the island had become the splendid emporium

of all the commerce of the Persian Gulf, resorted to by traders of all nations. Shah Abbas had long regarded it enviously, longing to add it to his dominions.[1] But he knew the wish was vain unless he could obtain naval aid from Europeans in Persia. The English factors, now thus approached, at length consented to join in the enterprise, provided they were exempted from paying customs on the Company's goods at Gombroon, as well as given a share of the duties imposed upon their rivals.

Under the terms of this new arrangement an expedition against Ormuz was planned early in 1622. Several Company's ships, which were being impatiently expected at Batavia and in the Spice Islands, together with a Persian army, advanced on the city and castle, which surrendered on 22nd April. Ruy Frere and his principal officers were sent prisoners to Surat, and the English found themselves in possession of considerable plunder, alike in ships, money and stores. They were besides duly granted, by the Khan of Shiras, a moiety of the customs at Gombroon,[2] which eventually became the chief English factory in the Persian Gulf. The first Anglo-Persian treaty of 1615 made by Connock was renewed, and

[1] By the treaty between Abbas and the agents of the Company all Mohammedans made captive were to be given up to the King of Persia, and all Christians to the English. Mr. Monnox, when he reports the fall of the island, boasts of his humanity to the prisoners; but adds: "I must trust to Heaven for my reward, for the Portuguese are but slenderly thankful".—Sir J. Malcolm, *History of Persia*, vol. i., p. 362.

[2] Now known as Bender-abbasi; a town in the Province of Kirman on the northern shore of the Persian Gulf.

the Shah saw fit to grant an additional firman, allowing the Company to purchase silks in any part of his kingdom and bring the same to Ispahan free of duty.

But the Company's agent, Monnox, who had exacted the Shah's promise, was to live to see the futility of expecting its literal fulfilment. His sanguine expectations "that their dear infant," *i.e.*, Gombroon, "would receive new life if the King but kept his word," were doomed to disappointment, and he was soon writing to the Company that "no benefit whatever can be expected from Ormuz unless held exclusively by the English". Shah Abbas emphatically refused, however, to permit the English to fortify Ormuz or any other harbour in the Gulf.

News of these proceedings was not long in reaching Goa, whence it was carried to Madrid, and from thence in the form of a Spanish complaint to the English Court. Prompt action was taken, but not of the kind expected. James did not waste any time commiserating with his cousin Philip (with whom he was just then sorely offended) over the loss of ships and treasure, nor did he rebuke the Company for the boldness of its servants in despoiling the Portuguese. Nay—he made all haste to share in the booty. A claim was preferred by the King, alleging the right of the Crown, and by the Duke of Buckingham, as Lord High Admiral, for a portion of the prize-money. The leaders of the Company appeared surprised and chagrined at the demand, but they could hardly have kept the secret of their servants' prowess at Ormuz from reaching

the ears of the Court. Certainly at this moment the Company was little prepared to "dispute any point with His Majesty". Yet it wholly resented the claim of the Duke of Buckingham. Why, it asked, should the favourite share a tenth of the prize-money, since the Company had not acted under any letters of marque granted by his Grace in his capacity of Lord High Admiral? But both James and Buckingham were obdurate. They impressed into Court all the captains who had participated in the affair at Ormuz, and obliged them to testify that the value of their prizes was £100,000 sterling (or 480,000 reals-of-eight). The King, sorely in need of money, ordered the Company forthwith to disburse his and the favourite's share. To this demand the Company was bold enough to demur, arguing that the £100,000 was very far from being all profit; it had been put to great expense and sustained grievous losses in Persia, largely to counterbalance the value of the captured prizes. Meanwhile a secret hope animated the directors that their fleet for the season would put to sea, and that protracted negotiations with the Crown would ultimately end in their exoneration from the alleged debt. In this project they nearly succeeded. The fleet actually set sail; but, as we have seen, was arrested at Tilbury, and the Company obliged to compound by paying £10,000 to the Duke of Buckingham in addition to £10,000 "for the King's use," before the ships were allowed to proceed.

Eventually arriving at their destination, it was only to learn of further outrages by the Dutch

It appeared that the year before several Mogul ships had set out from Surat, bearing pilgrims on their way to Mecca. Knowing that considerable merchandise was carried, and having no more scruples than Sir Edward Michelbourne himself, the Dutch fell foul of these defenceless craft and bore them in as prizes to their nearest factory.

On hearing this news, the Indian authorities were furious, and not yet learning to distinguish the different European nationalities, at once jumped to the conclusion that the English at Surat, Agra and Ahmedabad were implicated in the outrage. Orders were forthwith given for the Company's servants and goods to be seized, the former thrown into prison and the latter confiscated. The factors only obtained their liberty by the payment of huge bribes. This proceeding naturally rendered them so indignant that, although knowing the Dutch were the real culprits, in the first flush of anger they were ready to retaliate upon the Indian merchant marine, even to the length of themselves plundering the pilgrims. Fortunately, better counsels prevailed, and all the Company's naval armament was then urgently needed in the Persian Gulf, where the Portuguese were hovering about.

The resentment which the Company at home felt against Mogul officers and the Dutch at Surat and Persia was soon swallowed up in the fierce flood of indignation which had its rise in the famous tragedy of Amboyna.

By the agreement arrived at in 1619, after so much discussion, the East India Company sent out

instructions to its servants to establish a certain number of factories for its share of the trade in the Moluccas, at Banda and Amboyna. The latter island, the name of which was to be stamped with a red-hot brand on the English popular imagination for the best part of a century, covered an area of about 280 square miles. It was rich in cloves and nutmegs, and formed the principal key to the position which Coen had established for the Dutch in this important quarter of the Spice Archipelago. Here the Dutch had erected a really strong fortress, in addition to three inferior fortified posts elsewhere in the island and in the adjacent island of Ceram, one side of which was washed by the sea, and the other divided from the land by a moat four or five fathoms broad, constantly filled with sea-water. The garrison of the fort comprised 200 Dutch soldiers and a company of free burghers. There were, besides this force, three or four hundred free natives in the town of Amboyna, whose services could be commanded at a moment's warning. In the roadstead were eight Dutch ships, equally for the purposes of defence as of traffic.

A stone's throw from this stronghold, in a house of their own in the town, lived the English merchants and factors of the Company, a small band, striving to hold themselves on terms of equality with their more numerous and pretentious neighbours. At the head was Gabriel Towerson, who had served the Company for eighteen years in all parts of the East and had been appointed to succeed George Muschamp as agent at Amboyna in 1622.

A good-natured, incautious but reliable servant was Gabriel Towerson—indolent, perhaps, and a little fond of pomp—qualities which seem inseparable from long residence in the Indies, and probably accentuated in Towerson's case by his marriage with the native widow of Captain Hawkins, who was said to have royal blood in her veins.[1] Under him, all told, throughout the district were eighteen men and six boy slaves. Their headquarters in the town was a rickety wooden structure, with adjoining warehouse, and here Towerson and his friends endeavoured to maintain the dignity of the Company and their nation. They were virtually unarmed ; in fact, there were only a couple of muskets, with half a pound of powder, and three swords on the premises.

They continued thus some two years, having a close personal and business connection with the Dutch, who, not merely content with robbing the English in a business way, were even then prosecuting their old design to oust them from the entire Archipelago. The Governor whom Coen had appointed to command this part and administer the affairs of the island was one Herman van Speult, a person of infamous character, who seems to have been as little alive to those sentiments of courtesy and hospitality which animated the English agent, as he afterwards proved wholly dead to decency

[1] In 1617 Sir Thomas Roe wrote, from Agra, that Towerson "is here arrived with many servants, a trumpet, and more show than I use," which to us is testimony to Towerson's knowledge of what would render him popular at the Mogul Court.

and humanity. It is singular that Towerson, who was so often in his company, should not have perceived his real character, and drawn therefrom an augury of danger. Van Speult was often at his house, he in turn went often to the castle to dinner, and this circumstance, indicating a cordial intercourse between the two leaders, on being reported to Coen, made him suspect that his tool was not furthering his measures. The suspicion was unjust; Van Speult was a good servant. He was playing with Towerson as a cat might play with a mouse; his mind was quite made up; destitute of scruples he only awaited a convenient opportunity to spring upon his victim and crush him out of existence. Concerning the English at Amboyna, he wrote: "We hope to direct things according to your orders, that our sovereignty shall not be diminished or injured in any way by their encroachments, and if we may hear of any conspiracies of theirs against the sovereignty, we shall, with your sanction, do justice to them suitably, unhesitatingly and immediately". While this was being penned, Towerson was inviting the Dutch Governor to dinner and writing to the English President at Batavia of how he is charmed with Van Speult's "courtesies" and "love," begging that a letter of cordial acknowledgment be sent to him, "together with some beer or a case of strong waters, which will be very acceptable to him".

It will be remembered that the English, by the treaty of 1619, were to enjoy one-third of the trade of the islands, and likewise to contribute one-third of the expenses of civil and military administration.

There soon fell out differences between the two parties. The English complained that not only did the Dutch squander much money in building and unnecessary expenses, but brought in "large and unreasonable reckonings thereof to the common account". In fact, during the winter of 1622-23 it was manifest to Towerson and his friends that great cheating of accounts was going on, but this it was out of their power to remedy otherwise than by reporting it to the joint authorities at Batavia, and putting this down to one of the inevitable evils of the joint system, they strove not to let it interfere with their mutual relations and daily intercourse. Nevertheless there must have been a general feeling of relief when it was decided, on the occasion of the New Year's Day gathering of the English servants at Amboyna, not to invite the Dutch to participate in the festivities.

On the 10th of February, somewhat late in the evening, a Dutch sentinel patrolling the wall of the castle of Amboyna encountered there one of the Japanese levies, who appeared in a loquacious humour. The Dutch and Japanese of the garrison were not on the best of terms, and although the latter, who numbered about thirty in the whole island, for the most part served the Dutch as soldiers, yet they were not lodged in the castle, and were only occasionally called out of the town to assist in the watch. The sentinel professed to be struck by the nature of the questions put to him by the Japanese. He declared his suspicions were aroused that he was a spy, wherefore he promptly reported the

matter to the Governor. On the following morning a formal interrogation of the Japanese took place. It appeared that he had asked some innocent questions concerning the strength of the castle and the people that were therein. When asked his reason, he stated that he had done it for his own amusement, as it was "a common practice amongst the soldiers to learn the strength of the watch, so that they might know how many hours they might stand". This reply, which would have satisfied most men, coming from their own friends, was unacceptable to Governor van Speult. The Japanese was arrested, charged with treason, and put to the torture. By means of this treatment, endured for hours, the usual result was obtained. The unhappy wretch was made to confess that he had been concerned in a plot, with sundry others of his countrymen, to seize the castle. Notwithstanding its utterly incredible, and indeed its preposterous character, a statement to that effect was drawn up, and the victim signed it. Other Japanese were now apprehended and tortured, as well as a Portuguese, who had acted as guardian of the slaves under the Dutch. During the course of this examination, which extended over several days, the English went to and from the castle upon their customary business, seeing the prisoners and hearing of their tortures and of the crime laid to their charge, yet never once suspecting that they themselves were concerned in the matter. They had had no intimacy with the Japanese, and none of them were even acquainted with the Portuguese overseer, Perez.

After fifty-six hours of torture the story of a plot at last had been wrung from the sufferers. While the miserable Japanese were being carried, all bleeding and blistered, to gaol, Van Speult was reading over a confession which only needed one thing to render it complete for his purpose—the testimony of an Englishman.

It so chanced that there lay in the castle prison a certain English barber-surgeon, named Abel Price, who had in his cups offered to set a Dutchman's house on fire. Such a fellow was as wax in the hands of the Governor. Price was liberated, shown the Japanese who had been so hideously misused, and informed of the confession they had made, namely, that they were in league with the handful of unarmed English at Amboyna for the capture of a fortress held by 200 soldiers and twenty-four guns. The poor barber-surgeon stood astounded at the news, but fear soon replaced his amazement; his knees trembled beneath him. And when he was told that he must betray his compatriots, it hardly needed the application of red-hot irons to the soles of his feet to put him into the requisite frame of mind. Yet his captors did not spare him the rigours of fire and the rack. In his agony he affirmed whatever they chose to put in his mouth, and one of the most depraved and desperate plots in the annals of history stood revealed.

Forthwith about nine o'clock that same morning, 15th February, Van Speult and his council summoned Captain Towerson and the other Company's men who were in the town, on the pretext of conferring with

them. All answered the summons, save one who was left to guard the factory; they presented themselves before the Governor and were informed that their conspiracy had been discovered and that they must therefore consider themselves prisoners. Whereupon, with the exception of Towerson, they were severally seized, manacled and flung into confinement. Other Englishmen were also duly found at their posts, in the two islands, making a total of eighteen at the mercy of the murderous Dutch. The merchandise at the factory was transferred to the Dutch establishment, with all the chests, boxes, books and papers and personal effects of the Company's servants.

Of the prisoners, Towerson was committed to his chamber, with a guard of Dutch soldiers; Emmanuel Thomson was kept prisoner in the castle, and the others, John Beaumont, Edward Collins, William Webber, Ephraim Ramsey, Timothy Johnson, John Fardo and Robert Browne were sent in irons aboard the Dutch ships, then riding in the harbour. At the factory at Hitto three other Englishmen, Samuel Colson, John Clarke and George Sharrocks were found, and, at the other factories, John Saddler, John Powell, John Wetherall, Thomas Ladbrook and William Griggs.

The eighteen victims were now gathered together; little time was lost by Van Speult and his associates. It was in vain that the English agent begged to see his dear friend and colleague; in vain that he denounced the charge as monstrous, protesting before high heaven that he was innocent of

any treachery. Throughout the whole of the bloody transaction now to be carried out, without parallel even in the grim records of the Spanish Inquisition, and which must stand forever a monument to the crafty and bloodthirsty policy of the Dutch[1] in their conquest of the islands they still control, Van Speult found a facile and unscrupulous coadjutor in the Dutch "fiscal" or public prosecutor, Isaac de Bruyne. Indeed, it is difficult to decide which was the greater villain of the two. De Bruyne had been taken into the Dutch Company's service on the strength of his profession of legal knowledge; but he seems to have known about as much law as comported with his superior's policy. Indeed, the Dutch Governor-General afterwards confessed that the knowledge and judgment of the public prosecutor in this case were shamefully lacking. He ignored even the common forms and conventions of the law.

The first of the prisoners sent for were John Beaumont and Timothy Johnson, the latter of whom was taken manacled into a room of the castle, accompanied by several soldiers and a group of the Governor's creatures. The trembling Beaumont, left standing outside the chamber, guarded by a couple of the garrison, was left only for a moment in apprehension of what was to befall his comrade. He heard Johnson suddenly cry out in pain. There was a momentary silence, and then another pitiful wail smote his ears. After this had continued some

[1] "I believe it impossible," wrote Hedges at a later day, "to know a Hollander's temper and natural hatred to an Englishman so well in any other part of ye world as in India."—*Diary*.

little while another door was thrown open, and a haggard miserable wretch was dragged forth and bundled into the chamber of torture to confront Johnson. Although hardly recognisable from the treatment he had received and the remorse which lay at his heart, Beaumont knew the man for the barber-surgeon, Abel Price.

"But Johnson not yet confessing anything," runs the narrative of the survivors, "Price was quickly carried out and Johnson brought again to the torture, where Beaumont heard him sometimes cry aloud, then quiet again, then roare afresh. At last, after he had been an houre in this second examination, hee was brought forth wailing and lamenting, all wet and cruelly burnt in divers parts of his body, and so laid aside in a by-place of the hall, with a soldier to watch him that he should speak with nobody." [1]

Thomson was now brought in, and for a full hour and a half subjected to a like agony. What result was obtained by the Governor, Beaumont was not yet to learn. He was an older man than his companions, and Van Speult seems to have felt that he had gone far enough with his work for that day, for after tying up his third victim for what was known as the water ordeal, a most inhuman mode of torture, he bade him be loosed until the morrow, as a concession to his grey hairs, and himself retired to dine with the fiscal and the rest of the Dutch official coterie at the castle.

One would like to peep in at that dinner—to

[1] *A True Relation of the Unjust, Cruel and Barbarous Proceedings . . . at Amboyna.* London, 1624.

listen to the talk, to study the countenances of men who in a civilised age had set their hands blithely and without remorse to the outrageous extermination of a little group of Englishmen, their late companions and equals, their commercial associates. Perhaps such a glimpse would afford us a notion of character and motives which now seem inexplicable even to the most lenient historians of their own race. Evil, however, as the day's work had been, they were as yet but on the eve of their crime. We shall not flinch from relating this transaction in its details ; in its very blackness it bears with it a moral which does not deserve to be forgotten by English or Dutch.

Upon Sunday, the 16th of February, 1623, the Dutch, with that peculiar piety which distinguishes them to this day, said prayers at the castle. At the conclusion of this ceremony Van Speult issued orders for nine Englishmen to be dragged from their dungeons before him. One by one they were taken to a chamber to be tortured, while the rest shivered in the hall, listening to the sounds of their comrades' agony. The first man summoned, being tormented with water, broke down and confessed all that the fiscal De Bruyne asked him. The second, Collins, protesting his innocence with the most solemn oaths, they made his hands and feet fast to the rack, and after a brief respite, in response to his promise to confess all, the torture began.

"What would you have me say?" moaned Collins, "tell me what you would have me say, and though it be false yet will I speak it."

At this the fiscal professed himself in a rage.

"What, do you mock me?" he snarled, and gave orders to the servants to redouble their attentions. But Collins was not built of stern stuff; he could not endure the pain. He prayed to be again let down to his confession, and after pondering a while on some fiction which would be credited by his tormentors, told them that he and four others had plotted with the help of the Japanese to surprise the castle.

"'Tis well," said the fiscal, "and was not Captain Towerson of that company?"

"No," vehemently protested Collins.

"You lie," answered his captor, "did he not one day call you all to him—last New Year's Day—and tell you that those abuses of the Dutch had caused him to think of a plot and demanded your consent and secrecy?"

"Yes," interposed a Dutch merchant who stood in the torture chamber, "did you not all swear upon a Bible not to divulge the secret?"

The astounded Collins declared on his soul's salvation he knew nothing at all of what they told him.

"Up with him again!" exclaimed the fiscal, but as they laid hands on the staggering man he shrank from them, crying out, "Yes, yes, it is true".

"And by what means," continued the prosecutor blandly, "would you have executed your purpose?"

In vain the unhappy wretch, staring as a man just awakened from a fearful dream, strove to make some reply. He could think of none.

"Should not two Japanese have gone to each

point of the castle and two to the Governor's chamber-door, and when the hurly-burly outside had alarmed the Governor and he had come out to see what was happening, these men to have killed him?"

The boldness of such leading questions shocked even De Bruyne's associates.

"Let him speak for himself," one of them murmured; "don't tell him what to say."

Without waiting for a reply therefore to his question, the fiscal hurried on to others, demanding less invention on the part of the witness. He asked what sum the Japanese were to have for their share in the plot, and Collins answered at random, "1,000 reals apiece". But when he was requested to give the date chosen by the conspirators he could not reply, "not knowing what to devise upon the sudden". De Bruyne appeared to be content with his testimony and ordered him to be released. The Englishmen in the hall were shocked to see Collins come out "in such a case, with his eyes almost blown out of his head, with the torment of water," glad to be free from further suffering, "though with certain belief that he should die for this, his confession".

The foregoing spectacle so worked upon the feelings of Samuel Colson that, when he was led into the chamber and saw the rack, he cried out that he would confess "and so was quickly dismissed, coming out weeping, lamenting and protesting his innocency". But his fellow, Clarke, was of different fibre. As he refused to perjure his soul the fiscal

had a remedy handy for his stubbornness. Clarke was hoisted by cords about his wrists upon a large door, where they made him fast upon two iron staples at the top. As he hung there with arms and legs wide outstretched, his feet some two feet from the ground, they bound a thick cloth upon his neck and face. This done they poured water slowly upon his head until the cloth was full, submerging his mouth and nostrils. As he choked and gasped for breath, they drew the cords which bound him tighter and did not slacken the stream of water. The fluid penetrated his lungs and stomach and exuded from his eyes and ears; he swooned and they took him down and made him vomit up the water.

As soon as he displayed any symptoms of recovery he was confronted by De Bruyne, who asked him if he confessed. As he was silent, or his replies were semi-delirious, he was triced up again. The fortitude of this brave Company's man was so great that he endured this treatment three or four times, and it was not until his body was swollen to twice its size, and his eyes protruded so far in their sockets as to frighten the beholders, that his tormentors relaxed, averring that he was devil or wizard that could bear so much. But the brave Clarke was not yet through his ordeal. The fiscal ordered his hair to be shorn, and, stripping him, hoisted him up as before. He had endured water, he must now suffer fire. A lighted candle was therefore applied to the soles of his feet until the hissing flesh extinguished the candle. They burnt him also under the elbows

and arm-pits and in the palms of his hands. At last, as in his weakness and delirium he had no further control of himself, the fiscal put questions similar to those he had put to Collins, and eventually wrung a "yea, yea," to his story of a plot to seize the castle and put the Governor and the rest of the Dutch to death.

So, with the consignment of Clarke, with all his wounds and sores upon him, to a dungeon, ended this Dutch Sabbath day's work. Early on the following morn the process of examination was recommenced. The tortures of the previous day were applied first to the Japanese and then to the English, including the merchant Beaumont, who, old as he was and an invalid, "being triced up and drenched with water till his inwards were ready to crack, answered affirmatively to all the fiscal's interrogatories; yet, as soon as he was let down, he clearly demonstrated to Captain Nieuport and Jansen, a Dutch merchant then also present, that these things could not be so. Nevertheless he was forced to put his hand to the confession or else he must to the torture againe." And so, with a great iron bolt and two shackles riveted to his legs, he was carried back to prison. Of the others, Sharrocks showed most readiness of invention to avoid torture, but there being no collusion, his story could naturally not be reconciled with the fiscal's story of the plot, and he steadily denied that Towerson had ever spoken to him on the subject. He had not even seen his chief or fellow-countrymen in Amboyna for four months, and the plot was supposed to have been hatched on

the 1st of January. Nevertheless, they prepared his confession, and reading it out to him asked if it were true. "No," answered Sharrocks. "Why, then," roared the fiscal, "did you confess it?" "For fear of torment," was the reply. "The fiscal and the rest in a great rage told him he lyed; his mouth had spoken it and it was true, and therefore he should subscribe it."

At length Captain Towerson himself was brought into the presence of his "dear friends," the Governor and the fiscal.[1] We can well understand the reluctance of Van Speult to force his victim; but the Rotterdam lawyer was in no way abashed.

They listened for a time while Towerson earnestly protested his guiltlessness, and then De Bruyne ordered three of the English factors and traders to be brought in to confront their superior. They were ordered to re-affirm in his presence the testimony which had been wrung from them. While they stood pale and trembling before him, Towerson charged them solemnly that, as they would answer for it at the day of judgment, they should speak nothing but the truth. Two of the men instantly fell down on their knees before him begging him, for God's sake, to forgive them, and declaring that they could not help themselves, "that whatever they had formerly confessed was most false, and spoken only to avoid torment". Towerson bowed his head silently, perceiving now, for the first time, how

[1] Dryden, in his *Tragedy of Amboyna*, puts into Van Speult's mouth: "O my sworn brother, my dear Captain Towerson: the man whom I love better than a stiff gale," etc.

hopeless was the situation. Eight days were consumed in the work of torture, but on the ninth day, the 23rd of February, human nature could endure no more, and all the testimony was obtained that was necessary for Van Speult's purpose. Meanwhile, as the servants of the Company lay in their agony, the odour of their burnt flesh permeating the air "so that no one was able to endure the smell," no surgeon was come to dress their sores, until, in the case of Clarke and one or two others, his flesh putrefied, and "great maggots dropt from him in most noisome and loathsome manner".

Yet, although Van Speult and the members of the Dutch Council looked on the scenes which had just been enacted, although the cries of the victims protesting their innocence rang in their ears during those eight days, yet not a word was inscribed in the minutes concerning torture. The fact of torture having been used is concealed in the official report, wherein it is made to appear that the English confessed to a conspiracy against the Dutch. The members of the Council afterwards reluctantly admitted that torture had been used, but said it was of a "civil sort".

We have attempted to portray the character of the sufferings the Company's servants endured in order to make them vainly to perjure themselves and betray their countrymen, but the whole of the black story we have not set down. There was much else of detail in this eight days' ordeal—"the splitting of the toes and lancing of the breast and putting in gunpowder, and then firing the same, whereby the

body is not left entire, either for innocency or execution"—which the survivors afterwards revealed; but those horrors to which the Dutch themselves confess in their subsequent relation are enough to shock the least sensitive reader.

There was a two days' respite, and then the Englishmen were led forth into the great hall of the castle for sentence. A few imagined their sufferings would entitle them to compassion—that they would be banished, not murdered. But those who had already suffered so much were quickly undeceived. Compassion formed no part of the nature of Van Speult or the fiscal. All were condemned to death saving four, whose testimony that they had not even been in that part of the island could not be shaken.

Several of that unhappy group of unhappy beings received the pronouncement of their doom with joy. For the rest they were, as an instance of the Governor's clemency, allowed to draw lots for one life, and the free lot fell to Collins. At the earnest request of two Dutch friends, the English factor, Beaumont, was also respited. Thus far Towerson, in virtue of his position, had been spared the pain and ignominy of the torture chamber. His condemnation to death might have been supposed a guarantee that Van Speult's design was accomplished. But his continued protestations of innocence gave offence. He was ordered to indite a confession; he complied, but it was a profession of innocence not an avowal of guilt. When it was given to the Dutch interpreter to read out to the Court, the man shed tears, as he himself testified, so manifest was its truth and the

pathos of the situation. It is supposed that all the victims sought to leave some written record of their sufferings and of their innocence; but these were suppressed wherever discovered. Three alone succeeded. Colson wrote the following in the fly-leaves of his prayer-book, which was sewed up in a Dutch servant's bed:—

"Aboard the *Rotterdam*, lying in irons.

"Understand that I, Samuel Colson, late factor of Hitto, was apprehended for suspicion of conspiracy, and, for anything I know, must die for it; wherefore having no better means to make my innocency known, have writ this in this book, hoping some good Englishman will see it. I do here sweare upon my salvation, as I hope by His death and passion to have redemption for my sinnes, that I am clear of all such conspiracy, neither do I know any Englishman guilty thereof, nor other creature in the world. As this is true, God bless me, Samuel Colson."

Elsewhere, at the beginning of the Psalms, he wrote: "The Japoners were taken with some villainy and brought to examination; being most tyrannously tortured were asked if the English had any hand in their plot, which torture made them say yea. . . . As I mean and hope to have pardon for my sinnes, I know no more than the child unborn of this business. Written with my owne hand." Griggs wrote this in a memorandum book, which he hid: "We, through torment, were constrained to speak that which we never meant nor once imagined, the which we take upon our deaths and salvation, that tortured as with that extreme torment of fire and

water, that flesh and blood could not endure. . . . And so farewell ; written in the dark." Everything that Towerson himself wrote of the truth was confiscated except a couple of lines in English which he added to his signature of a bill of debt against the Company, and which went undetected until it came into the hands of the English agent at Banda for payment :

"*Firmed by the firme of mee, Gabriel Towerson, now appointed to die, guiltless of anything that can be justly laid to my charge. God forgive them their guilt and receive me to His mercy. Amen.*"

Towerson resigned himself to his fate, thinking his earthly pangs over. But Van Speult was not satisfied. On the following day the prisoners were summoned ostensibly to prepare themselves for death. While they were there, "holding themselves as stedfast as they could," two soldiers approached Towerson. He was singled out from the rest : he was conducted to the torture chamber. Two great jars of water were borne in after him, and the others shuddered, well knowing what these things portended. What Towerson went through will never be known. His drawn and livid features were only seen by them on the following day on the scaffold. Yet it appeared that he also had been forced to subscribe to a "confession".

On the following morning there was a sound of drums in Amboyna. In response to the summons the people, Dutch and native, flocked in great numbers to the castle and principal streets "to behold this triumph of the Dutch over the English". While

the crowd was assembling the pardoned Beaumont, by means of a bribe to the gaoler, managed to see one of his friends for a moment, who had expressed an earnest desire to speak with him. He found the man, Emmanuel Thomson, alone in his miserable cell, all swathed in bloody clothes. He clasped Beaumont's hand and prayed him when he came into England, to do his duty to the honourable Company, his masters . . . and to certify to them of his innocence, "which," said he, "you yourself know well enough". Is there not pathos in the fact that the last words of most of these martyrs were for the Company! Yet they had not forgotten the duties and consolations of religion, and many of them had spent the night in prayer and in singing Psalms. Colson, indeed, had composed a special prayer in writing, which he devoutly read out to his fellows at the place of execution.

All was now ready for the ceremony which Van Speult had arranged should precede the public slaughter. The condemned, including the Japanese, were led out of the castle, taking, as they passed, a tearful farewell of their countrymen, and made to march in a long procession through the town.

The work was soon done. They had prepared a cloth of black velvet for Towerson's body to fall upon. This cloth, being stained and defaced with his blood, was unmarketable, and so was actually afterwards put to the account of the English Company!

There was no demonstration amongst the spectators. Even many of the Dutch must have wondered

at Van Speult's animosity and rancour, but they did not dare question his power to crush commercial rivalry as he pleased. Perhaps they would have marvelled had they known the truth. Had they known that two short days before a Dutch ship had arrived at Amboyna bearing a letter from the English President and Council at Batavia addressed to Towerson, they might well have marvelled more; for it contained positive orders, dated the middle of January, to the Company's agent to quit Amboyna and return to Batavia. This letter was opened by Van Speult, and must have convinced him, had he not known already, of the utter baselessness of the charges against the English, that they strove to obtain control of the island of Amboyna. But the murderer destroyed it: the knowledge it contained made no difference to his plans.

Two pits were dug and the English buried therein. The survivors were sent to Batavia; the Governor laid hands on the English factories and the work of bloodshed and expulsion was over.

While the tragedy was taking place at Amboyna, the chief emporium of the trade in the Spice Islands was the scene of further collision between the Dutch and English. Carpentier, the new Dutch Governor at Batavia, exercised his power with positive tyranny. The servants of the English Company were reduced to that defenceless situation in which they could neither resist ill-treatment from the natives nor resent the wrongs and injuries done them by their commercial rivals. The English factory had been charged with every item of expense, but they had no

voice in the disposal of moneys received, or indeed in any detail of the management of the trade. The Council, instead of employing the fleet of defence for the mutual protection of the joint commerce of the two companies, openly bent their efforts to consolidate the sovereignty of the Dutch. They devised projects for ruining the English stock and shipping throughout the whole of the southern seas, in conformity with Coen's great aspiration to witness the Dutch solitary and supreme in that quarter of the East. They even executed, under pretence of a conspiracy, great numbers of the unhappy natives at Banda ; and, on a similar pretext, had desolated the island of Pularoon, where the English had a flourishing factory, leaving it nearly destitute of inhabitants. Yet, as will be remembered, the States-General and the Dutch Company had solemnly pledged themselves to allow the English a proportion of the Spice Islands' trade.

We have already seen that the English President and Council at Batavia had sent orders, in January, 1623, to Towerson and his factors at Amboyna, to desert that station with their property and join the main body of English : perceiving how hopeless it was for their agent to maintain himself against so much opposition and recognising that their greatest safety against their Dutch partners lay in consolidating their numbers.

In March, 1623, the Company's agent, Thomas Brockedon, and his band of English factors and traders lately at Firando were awaiting the arrival of Towerson, in obedience to the orders of the

English Council. The Dutch ship in which arrangements had been made for their transportation at last arrived at Batavia: boats were put out from the vessel and a dismal handful of sorrowful, haggard Englishmen stepped on shore. When Beaumont was asked what had become of Gabriel Towerson he burst into tears. From the lips of these men came the story of the tragedy of Amboyna. Brockedon had a force of 200 men under him, but he and the Council were quick to realise that all were doomed unless they beat a retreat or unless the usurped authority of the Dutch could be beaten down. Every port and island was now under Dutch influence: their remonstrances were treated with indifference by Carpentier and they were now forced to request his permission to withdraw themselves and their property from Java, as soon as they could hit upon a place of safety in which to await further instructions from England. At the same time the Company's chief agent sat down and wrote his employer that further negotiations in Europe were futile. The English interests must be totally separated from those of the Dutch, unless the Company was prepared to employ force; for force equal to their enemies, and that alone, could enable them to continue the trade.

"Apply to His Majesty to issue orders to liberate us from the intolerable yoke of the Dutch nation." To this cry their fainting hopes rallied.

Meanwhile they thought of taking possession of the island of Bessi, which had a fair harbour, was not unfavourably situated for trade and was im-

mediately under the protection of the King of Bantam. If they had hopes of retiring to more distant posts, such as Firando in Japan, to Siam or Patani, those hopes were speedily dashed to the ground. For English ships arrived from each of these places, telling a similar tale of an unequal contest with the Dutch, and there was nothing for it but to withdraw the English factories in each case.

Moreover, the exclusion of the Company from the pepper trade, as well as from the Spice Islands, appeared to render the factory at Pulicat, on the Coromandel Coast, of no avail, because spices from the Moluccas (Amboyna and Banda) were requisite for that market. Rather than maintain it, therefore, it was felt to be a better plan to accept an offer which had been made by the Rajah of Tanjore to establish a factory in his dominions. In Tanjore, besides, they fancied they would be free to prosecute trade without interference from the Hollanders, who had been denied permission by the King to establish their operations there. The Council, therefore, sent a ship to the Coromandel Coast to spy out the land and the chances of settlement, and another to discover a temporary retreat for themselves and the Company's servants. The island of Bessi being found impracticable, Captain Swan in the *Charles* finally took possession of the wretched isle of Lagundy, to the south-east of Sumatra, to which he gave the name of Prince Charles's Island. It was even hoped that here might be secured a proportion of the fine spices to form part of the

dwindling investments for the Company. With this retreat in view there was now nothing to detain those who still lingered on at Batavia. Their condition was at this time of the most abject kind. Never have Englishmen in whom lingered a spark of courage or ability sunk so low. They were held on a par with the natives. They were despised and constantly insulted. Such was the state of affairs at Batavia when they resolved to quit "this perfidious people" and find refuge in their new island of Prince Charles. This was in October, 1624, when the seven richly-laden Company's ships which had left England in the spring were already in Eastern waters.

A few months later died Sir Thomas Smythe, the Company's first Governor. He had relinquished the Governorship since 1621[1] to Sir William Halliday, and his closing days were embittered by unjust charges. He was accused of enriching himself at the Virginia Company's expense, and before he had entirely cleared himself expired, in his sixty-eighth year, at Sutton-at-Hone, where he was buried. Governor Smythe was one of the founders of Tonbridge School and the patron of Arctic discovery.

[1] He resigned from weakness and old age, after having created and fully established the prosperity of a famous body which, in after years, was destined to found a great empire. Sir Thomas had himself adventured £20,000; he had closely attended to details respecting the equipment of ships, training of officers and regulation of trade; and had instilled his own enthusiasm and desire to advance the honour as well as the wealth of his country into the Company's servants.—Markham, *Baffin's Voyages*.

CHAPTER VII.

Testing the King's Friendship.

THE post of Governor of the East India Company was no sinecure. He, the outward and visible sign of the continuity of the Company throughout all its vicissitudes of stock, of personnel, of trade methods, was expected to be a member of Parliament in daily attendance, that he might there rise in his place and answer any imputations which should be cast on the Company. He had to preside in person or by his deputy at all the Company's meetings. He had not only to superintend the details of a great import and export business, to set on foot new subscriptions, to reconcile the conflicting voyages or joint-stock groups and to wind up their accounts; he had also to be in constant and confidential communication with the Government, "something of a courtier to the Stuarts and a good deal of a saint under the Commonwealth". At the same time the Governor had to be placed by his wealth above the suspicion of using his office for his private ends.[1]

Morris Abbott, who in 1624 succeeded Smythe's

[1] No fixed salary was paid either to Governor, Deputy-Governor or Committees, *i.e.*, directors, the adventurers voting them an annual "gratification" when the general council was held. "Gratifications" varied in value according as the year's profits were large or small, but in any case, the directors came to expect them and regular payments gradually evolved.—*Cal. of State Papers.*

successor, Halliday, in the Governorship, was in his fifty-ninth year. Although his father had been but a simple Guildford tradesman in Queen Mary's reign, yet he was not the only one of the family to achieve a post of trust and distinction. Two brothers went into the church and became respectively Archbishop of Canterbury and Bishop of Salisbury. Morris, as a prosperous city merchant, took a part in most of the commercial ventures of his time, and his name figures on the list of men who petitioned Elizabeth for a charter for the East India Company in 1599 and also appears in the charter granted by James. After fifteen years' zealous service as a director or member of the committee of twenty-four he was chosen Deputy-Governor. He also received the honour of knighthood on the accession of Charles and was elected a member of Parliament. It needed all the influence, patience and ability of the new Governor to face the situation. As deputy, he had already had some bitter schooling in the diplomacy of the Court, in the matter of the Dutch controversy; but no sooner had he succeeded to the chief direction of the Company, than the news of Amboyna, a business blacker than any which had gone before, came to test his metal and capacity for true steering through the devious paths of contemporary faction.

At first the story of the massacre could hardly be credited; but, over and above the solemn depositions of the survivors, which had been forwarded from the capital of Java, corroboration was soon forthcoming from Holland itself. Several Dutch sailors who

had been in the neighbourhood at the time of the tragedy spoke freely concerning it; the Dutch official report was circulated at Amsterdam; the Dutch chief factor, Mareschalk, one of the judges, had returned home. The prayer-book which had belonged to Samuel Colson reached his family; its pathetic entries excited general compassion. Of the substantial truth of the narrations sent by their President and Council at Batavia there could be no further reason to doubt. A careful narrative was therefore drawn up in accordance with the report and depositions; it was read to a full meeting of the Court; a copy was sent to the printers (a large staff of whom sat up all that night to compose it), and with another copy Governor Abbott hastened to the King, who is said to have shed tears over the fate of Towerson and his companions.

When the members of the Company separated after this meeting the story of the tragedy flew from lip to lip. No one who heard it could refuse the tribute of tears to so much suffering, but the predominant feeling throughout the nation was one of indignation at the outrage and exasperation against the Dutch. Vengeance was called for. An Englishman meeting a Hollander in Austin Friars spat in his face. A crowd gathered round the Dutch Chapel in Lothbury and hooted the outcoming congregation. "Hypocrites—murderers!" they cried. "Amboyna will cost you Paradise!" It became known that the King had openly wept when the narrative was read out to him in the royal closet. The Company conjured His Majesty to interpose

his authority with the States-General, that redress might be obtained and justice visited upon the persons who were guilty of this infamous business.

A memorial to this effect was accordingly presented without loss of time to the States-General by Sir Dudley Carleton, English Ambassador at the Hague. In the following month (September) a committee was appointed by the King, consisting of the highest officers of the realm, to take into consideration the complaint of the East India Company and to examine such of the sufferers as had escaped from Amboyna and had arrived in England. This body set instantly to work and arrived at the only conclusion which was possible, consistent with the facts of the case. The "breach of the international law" lately perpetrated by the Dutch had proceeded not from any conspiracy on the part of the King's subjects in Amboyna, but from a fixed plan of their rivals to expel them from the Spice Islands. Strong measures were clearly demanded, and they therefore recommended that an order should be issued to the Lord High Admiral to send out a fleet and lay hold of the Dutch outward and homeward East India ships and keep them fast in England till reparation should be made. King James agreed, and the Duke of Buckingham received orders to this effect, dated the 30th of September, 1624. But it was one thing to order such a seizure and another to carry it out: three years were to elapse before three large Dutch East Indiamen came into our grasp at Portsmouth.

In the meantime the Company was in a quandary.

The spirited action of the Court in espousing its cause incensed the Dutch, who showed no haste to adjust matters, either as to reparation for the wrongs done or guarantee for future justice in the relations between their countrymen and the English in the far East. Until some arrangement could be arrived at the danger of sending out further ships and supplies to the scene of collision was manifest. On the 12th of November the Company wrote to Secretary Conway requesting that it might be allowed to send one of its number, Mr. Young, as a special emissary to the Hague, and that he might be vested with the same powers as if he had come from the King, to co-operate with Sir Dudley Carleton and accelerate the business with the Dutch Government.

All during that winter the indignation of the public mind continued to grow against the Dutch. This was fostered by the publication of various pamphlets and broadsides calculated to inflame the popular imagination. The two or three survivors of the tragedy of Amboyna became popular heroes, and were received everywhere with enthusiasm. Nor was the Company loth to contribute its share at arousing the sentiment of the nation. It sent for a painter and instructed him to compose upon a large canvas a lively delineation of the massacre, wherein Herman van Speult and the fiscal are seen gloating over their bloody triumph. This picture it caused to be exhibited in its hall "as a perpetual memorial of Dutch cruelty and treachery," and invited the public to view it. In those days such an expedient was a surer way of stamping the transaction upon

the public mind than by means of printed words. The Dutch merchants resident in London took alarm. The publications which had been disseminated had exposed them to prejudice; but this picture threatened their personal safety and they successfully petitioned the Government that it should be withdrawn.

It was charged that the popular mind had also been inflamed by a sermon, a pamphlet and a play. As for the play and the pamphlet, the directors of the Company, when duly called before the Privy Council, cleared themselves; nor had they read the sermon, but they confessed to the ownership of the picture, "which was done with much cost," but it was "for the Company's own private use. Whereupon the Lords of the Council gently admonished the Company not to publish the picture at least till Shrove Tuesday be past, and accordingly it was ordered that the door of the room in the Company's house where the picture stood should be locked."

Richard Greenbury, the artist, afterwards demanded £100 for his picture, but was told by the Company that "he was mostly to be blamed for permitting such a multitude to have a sight of it in his house," and that "one proffered to cut it out in brass for £30, which was a great deal more labour and workmanship than to draw it on cloth". Thus was the painter's delicate art esteemed in England at that day! Greenbury had finally to be content with £40 for his work.

The mission of Young to Holland did little to further results; it was not until the King ordered

Secretary Conway to prepare a commission for the London Company authorising it in future to build forts in the East Indies for the security of its trade that the Dutch were roused into activity. They advanced proposals, but these proposals only marked further their resolve to continue an absolute sovereignty. They were indignantly rejected, and in the midst of parleying so heated as to presage war, King James died.

The negotiations concerning reparation for Amboyna were immediately broken off, and, uncertain as to what course to pursue, what instructions to give to its servants, but conscious that its affairs were in an evil posture, the Company, early in 1625, sent out six ships. If these failed in the attempt to maintain the just proportion of trade to which the Company was entitled, then there was nothing for it but to seek new fields of action, and withdraw its servants and property from its far Eastern factories.

For the moment all hope of obtaining redress for Amboyna seemed to have vanished.[1]

The first quarter of the seventeenth century had passed, not, it is true, without storms and dangers, and it had ended in bloodshed. At home the Company had emerged safely; but Abbott and his fellow-committeemen of the Company could not but

[1] "It says much," remarks Mr. Noel Sainsbury, "even if it seem strange in the present day, that so great a catastrophe as the Amboyna massacre was not only constantly before the English people for nine months, but was also one of the topics of popular interest." —*Calendar of State Papers*, East Indies, 1625-29. And yet that event, one cannot help remarking, is not even mentioned by our popular modern historians, including J. R. Green.

feel themselves, at the outset of the second quarter, and of a new reign, on the brink of a crisis in their affairs.[1]

Charles I., on his accession, became involved in a war with Spain and the Emperor. The public revenue was depressed, and the King staggered under a load of debt bequeathed to him by his royal father. Besides, there were already factions in the realm at home, who held their schemes in abeyance only until they had an opportunity to assert them in Parliament. Being under engagement to assist the Dutch it was little likely that the monarch would break with his friends in Europe merely for the crimes they had committed against his subjects in the East.

Under these unsatisfactory conditions the Company's ships sailed from the Thames, only to learn, on arrival at their several destinations, tidings well calculated to depress them. At Surat the incursions of the Dutch upon the trade had increased. But the news which made the deepest impression upon the Company's new arrivals was the appointment by the Joint Council of Defence of the arch-villain, Herman van Speult, to be Dutch Governor at Surat. To the English factory at Batavia was left the task of protesting against an appointment from which everything was to be feared. Unhappily, this factory was in no state to sustain such a protest. We have seen the spectacle of its disheartened inmates sailing away to a lonely and unhealthy islet

[1] See Bruce's *Annals*. *Calendar of State Papers*, 1630-34.

to escape from their Dutch oppressor. There they landed and remained, a miserable band, until the 31st of May, 1625, when the calamities of the little settlement waxed so many that they were driven to petition the captain of a Dutch ship to carry them back to Batavia. Out of 250 souls, not less than 120 were sick of fever and scurvy; they could not muster a sufficient crew to enable them to despatch a single ship to any of the English factories.

The Dutch at Batavia, stung by remorse at the results of the policy laid down by Coen, appear to have taken compassion upon the afflicted English, and accorded them a decent hospitality. In the course of some months they had sufficiently recovered to project schemes whereby it was hoped to benefit the Company. They were, it is true, unable yet to settle at Bantam, where the reigning Pangran had offered the English traders every encouragement to resume their commerce. Nor were their prospects bright in Sumatra, where the Dutch had been equally active in establishing an exclusive trade, and where, owing to the machinations of the bellicose and unjust Dutch Council, the English factor had been drawn into a co-partnership in the wars between the Kings of Achin and Jambee.

The servants therefore wrote home to the Company, begging it to direct its future attention to Surat or the Coromandel Coast, and themselves despatched a vessel to Masulipatam, with a cargo of cloves, sandal-wood and money to the value of about 24,000 reals.

They firmly believed that, although the trade at

Masulipatam had declined, owing to Dutch rivalry and the extortions of the native Governor, yet both here and at Surat a profitable port to port commerce might be carried on in spices and Coromandel coast cloths.

Early in 1626 the English agent of the Company at Batavia fixed on another station on the Coromandel coast, at Armagon,[1] situated thirty-five miles north of Pulicat, from which factory they had been forced to retire owing to the continued oppression of the Dutch. They hoped by fortifying this new post, where the local raja had granted them a small patch of territory, and defending it with such ordnance as they could afford, to hold out against the attacks of the natives who were always ready for plunder, and also against the Dutch should they venture upon open hostilities.

In 1627 the Company's servants at Batavia wrote asking that each year there should be sent a sum of £67,500 in specie to Masulipatam "to be invested in country cloths, which would be exchanged in Batavia for spices at a profit of £135,000". Yet, although Masulipatam seemed such a promising half-way mart between Persia and Bantam, the Dutch and the local authorities were at that very moment making it so unbearable for the English factors that they made up their minds to steal away to Armagon, never to return, they swore, until they had a grant direct from the King of Golconda.

While the Amboyna affair was busily engaging

[1] Now known as Durgarayapatnam.

the Company at home, the irrepressible Sir Robert Shirley once again landed in England. It will be remembered that Shirley, who had formed a connection with the King of Persia, had already given the East India Company a great deal of anxiety through his attempts to conclude a commercial treaty with the King of Spain. This had fallen through; but Shirley had not been engaged for the better part of his life in plots and adventures to be put so quickly out of countenance. The death of King James caused him to subside for a season or two, and now, in 1626, he reappeared on the scene. He seems to have fluctuated in his nationality, for as he had formerly declared himself "an Englishman acting for the interests of the King of England in Persia," he now transposed the *rôle* and appeared as an ambassador from the Shah acting in his Persian master's behalf in England. In this capacity he applied to King Charles that his Majesty might be pleased to order the Company to pay him £2,000 as "compensation for his exertions in endeavouring to establish a trade between Persia and England".

"Services!" cried the Company in its turn, "why, we have only received injuries from you, Sir Robert Shirley!" And as to embarking in any fresh schemes, involving large outlay, it told the King that its debts were £200,000 and that its first duty to its constituents and the country was to liquidate such enormous liabilities.

Seeing he could get nothing, Shirley wrote to the Privy Council announcing his intention, with their permission, to return to Persia, where he would dis-

charge his duty to his new sovereign, the Shah of that country, "without forgetting his allegiance to his natural sovereign, the King of England".[1] Shirley duly reached Persia, but he was slighted by Abbas; and in 1628 death intervened and put an end to his schemes.

The newly established trade between Surat and Persia was still precarious. Though the Company's agents proceeded under the firmans which had been obtained with so much difficulty from the Shah, they found the prices demanded for silks and other Persian commodities were so high and the market for English cloth and tin so small, that they began to despair. Some of them, indeed, were for selling off their goods, horses and household furniture, and winding up their affairs in Persia.

But there was still a hope that a direct appeal to the Shah might induce him to interpose his royal authority to remedy the situation. And although the appeal failed, yet one addressed to the Grand Vizier, coupled with a threat to retire altogether from Persia, had in a measure the desired effect. The merchants at Shiras, Ispahan and Gombroon were rebuked for their policy of extortion, and the Persian Government consented to make the Company a free gift of two loads of silk out of every hundred, as well as to purchase from it whatever quantity of cloth and tin they might import. So little was the Khan of Shiras trusted that, although it had been promised that the Company was to re-

[1] Letter from Sir Robert Shirley to the Privy Council, 26th July, 1626.

ceive half the customs at Gombroon on account of the assistance given in the Ormuz affair, the factor at this port could hardly restrain his joy upon receiving a first sum of 225 tomands (£675) on account of this treaty. He wrote to Kerridge at Surat in the most enthusiastic terms of the new prospects of the Persian trade, albeit reckoning without the Portuguese, whose cruisers perpetually harassed the Persian ports and in several instances made off with the Company's cargoes, under pretence that they belonged to the Shah, with whom they were then at war. More than this, the Dutch had already commenced active intrigue from Surat to supplant the English in the Persian trade. The chief inventor and abettor of this new policy was, need it be said, Herman van Speult. Dutch agents were sent to the Court of the Shah, then engaged in defending Bagdad, which was besieged by the Turks, and by insinuating themselves into the royal good graces obtained a grant entitling them to a larger proportion of the silk trade than the English enjoyed. The Company's agents at Ispahan took alarm ; they wrote to the monarch, representing that the English traders had for years been exposed to the trouble of opening the Persian trade by sea, that it was not just that the Dutch should now oust them from it. They prayed the Court at least to place the contract with the English on the same terms as the Dutch had just secured. The precaution of bribing heavily the Grand Vizier was not neglected ; a worthy who was, from the memory of past favours, not indisposed to help them.

The Dutch schemes were to be checkmated, but their promoter, Van Speult, was never to learn of it. The apprehensions with which the Company and all its agents in the East heard of his recent appointment were, early in 1627, removed by news of the scoundrel's death. This auspicious event occurred while he was in the act of directing an expedition against the Portuguese in the Red Sea. By means of threats he had forced Kerridge and his fellows at Surat to co-operate, and he himself set out in the squadron. Off Mocha, the largest of the Dutch ships, mounting 44 guns, ran aground and was wrecked. Van Speult was taken on shore, and there perished. But the manner of his death is vaguely enclouded, although there can be little doubt of the satisfaction and relief the fact afforded to the English.

The disappearance of Van Speult from the scene induced the English factors at Surat to believe that matters would proceed more harmoniously, that a new and less dangerous policy of trade would be pursued by their rivals. They had even hopes of getting a footing on the island of Bombay, and so made a proposition to the Dutch for their co-operation. The factors at Surat had found from experience that the only real security to their property and commerce lay in entrenching themselves behind properly guarded forts.[1] It was useless to depend altogether upon the promise of the local Nawab or Governor, even in times of peace ; but

[1] And yet Roe had foolishly boasted a decade before : "If the Emperor were to offer me ten forts I would not accept of one ".

now, when a civil war between the sons of the late Emperor loomed up on the Indian horizon, it was, therefore, all the more necessary to take proper precautions. But the Dutch would not listen to the English proposal, even though it was understood that, were this island wrested from the Portuguese, it should be shared equally between Dutch and English.

Jehangir, son of the great Akbar, had occupied the Delhi Musnud for a period of twenty-two years, having succeeded his father in 1605. Although he was almost destitute of eminent qualities, yet the Imperial Court still exhibited the signs of wealth and power. He was succeeded in 1627 by his grandson Shah Jehan, in whose reign the Rajput country, a large part of the Deccan and Bengal, began to manifest disorder and an ambition towards independence.

Indeed, at this time the need for a properly fortified station, which should be independent of the native powers, began to present itself strongly to the Company. The agencies at Ahmedabad and Broach were withdrawn. To erect a fort at Ormuz or to get an independent hold at Muscat, where the Portuguese were entrenched, was impracticable. The English in India, recognising the instability of their tenure at Surat, were more than once in favour of removing their station to Dabul, at which place profitable exchanges might be made of pepper and spices for Malabar and Coromandel cloths, which might also furnish a supply for the growing Persian trade. Meanwhile, they made the most of their

chances at Surat, laying in, besides other goods, 3,000 maunds of saltpetre from Agra, for the manufacture of gunpowder by the Company in Europe.

The situation of the Company in Java, Sumatra and the far East was far from assuring. We have seen how its servants had been excluded from China, Japan, Siam and Cambodia, and the measures of the Dutch to ruin the English commerce throughout the southern markets showed little sign of cessation. A ray of light had indeed shone upon them from Bantam, whose king had invited the English to return, while steadily refusing the Dutch entry into the harbour. But, unluckily, they had not sufficient money or merchandise at this time to re-open the trade. Coen, the Dutch Governor-General, made it very clear in a visit which he paid to the English President and Council on his departure for Holland, that he would be greatly incensed if the English attempted trade with Bantam. In spite of all their predecessors had suffered, the spirit of the Company's traders at Batavia was not yet broken, and this threat only determined them to revive at the first opportunity the Bantam trade. They also resolved to attempt again a trade with Japan and China, as well as the other places from which they had been extruded by their rivals.

Gathering their forces together, therefore, and taking advantage of the arrival of three ships from England, the traders sailed for Bantam, landed there and were well received by the king. The Dutch ships in harbour, whose crews had been prevented from disembarking, and who, in retaliation, had

amused themselves by bombarding the settlement, watched this exploit of the English with severe displeasure. Their surliness was not diminished when they learned that the petty ruler of Bantam had actually despatched a letter and several presents to the King of England, and had otherwise showed his amity towards the English traders. This action exalted the spirit of the Company's servants at Batavia at a critical moment, and was magnified by them into a great triumph. Whether it was to be a permanent one or not, the sequel will show.

But, for the moment, it seemed as if the English had regained a foothold in the Spice archipelago.

We have seen that the Company in 1625-26 was engaged in soliciting redress from the Dutch for the violations of the conditions of the treaty of 1619, as well as reparation for the Amboyna massacre, and that with Charles's accession the negotiations were suspended. The Company professed itself sanguine that Charles would see justice done to its interests in the East, and so, early in 1627, sent out seven large ships to continue its efforts to preserve a proportion of the East India trade.

The early deportment of Charles lent much colour to the directors' view of his friendship. He was astute enough to recognise the value of the loyalty of this body of London merchants. His own affairs grew daily more embarrassing. Unable to obtain supplies from Parliament he had recourse to the fatal expedients of loans and ship-money. It was probably quite as much desire to win the regard of an influential section of his subjects as direct

pecuniary motives which induced Charles now, in view of the persistent obstinacy of the Dutch, to carry into effect that measure which James had attempted in vain. Three Dutch ships bound for Surat were arrested on the high seas and brought into Portsmouth. The populace hailed this proceeding with joyful cheers, and the Dutch captains' complaints were greeted with derision. Meanwhile orders were sent to Sir Isaac Wake, the new English Ambassador at the Hague, explaining the reason of this seizure. Charles had no designs upon the Dutch merchandise and bullion, but he was fixed in his resolution to obtain reparation for the wrongs the English Company and their servants had suffered in the East. The States-General were furious at what they considered a high-handed outrage and threatened to send an armed fleet into Portsmouth harbour to fetch away their property, while the Dutch admiral had the audacity to attempt to elude the authorities and put to sea with his ships. This bold attempt was discovered in the nick of time, and Lord Conway politely informed the foiled Dutchman that a further essay of this character on his part might provoke a declaration of war. Possibly this intimation may have impressed its recipient at Portsmouth, but it was not taken very seriously by the authorities at the Hague. They were quick to perceive that Charles's bold front could not long be maintained. The Dutch Company believed they could bring him to terms by a simple expedient, whenever they chose, so desperate was known to be the King's pecuniary affairs.

In England the feeling against the Dutch was swallowed up in the popular indignation against the King. The Spanish war had had an unlucky issue. His disputes with France were equally unfortunate. His schemes for further Crown loans had ended in disappointment, and he had been obliged to summon Parliament anew. This body met; the famous Petition of Rights was framed and presented to the King as an indispensable preliminary to passing a vote of supplies. It was indignantly rejected and the King prorogued Parliament. At this critical juncture a school of interested politicians and pamphleteers began to make themselves heard. Under the specious pretext of free trade they urged on the nation, as one of the grievances against the monarch, the desirability of throwing open the Indian commerce to all such merchants as could afford to send a ship to the Indies. There had always been a party both on the Exchange and in the House of Commons favourable to the desires and projects of the private traders or interlopers, but this party had been confronted at the outset by the fact of the royal charter granted to the Company. In the troublous times that were now overtaking the country, the moment seemed ripe to impugn the sanctity of the royal prerogative, to weaken the principle of the Company's monopoly, and to agitate for competition in the Indian trade. Several of the directors took alarm at this, and the Company was led to propitiate the popular representatives of the nation, while not forfeiting the good-will of the King. This policy was certainly dangerous, and might have had an

unfortunate sequel. But Charles was not inclined to take offence.

The memorial presented to the House of Commons stated that the failure of the spice trade and the difficulties of the Company in opening a traffic on the Coromandel Coast had cost it heavily. These difficulties, it went on to say, had partly arisen from native opposition, but were chiefly due to the inimical and oppressive policy of the Dutch. As to the advantage which the East India trade had been to the realm there could be no honest doubt whatever; this was very great considering the vast sums which the Company habitually employed, and the fact that their ships carried 10,000 tons and gave employment to 2,500 seamen. The value of its exports of British staples, such as woollen and tin, had not only been an encouragement to the manufacturing industry, but to agriculture; and, finally, the Company pointed out that its imports of Eastern produce had lowered the prices of those articles—silks and spices—in the home markets. The House of Commons was, however, in no mood to busy itself with the Company's arguments and grievances. If Charles felt a passing irritation at the precipitous and somewhat ungrateful action of the merchants, he did not betray it. He even graciously signed a letter to the ruler of Bantam acknowledging the presents sent by that petty ruler, and at the same time requesting protection for the Company's servants resorting to that part of Java.

About this time, too, are visible the first effects of disputes in the internal government of the Com-

pany. For more than two years a director, Thomas Smethwick, by his invidious behaviour, caused the Company much trouble and annoyance. Smethwick headed a faction of innovators. His attitude towards the Governor and the whole Court, when they refused to allow him to pass over an adventure he had purchased, was such that it was thought best not to overlook this affront, but to "battulate," *i.e.*, forbid him to trouble the Court further in order to advance his ends. In revenge, he did everything possible to prevent the Governor and committee from carrying out their resolutions regulating the Company's affairs. His "malice, slanders, abuse and unbeseeming carriage" had considerable weight with some members of the Company. Such was Smethwick's influence that his partisans were accused of working against the proposals for raising a new stock. Finally, when he circulated amongst both English and Dutch a paper which was thought to be a plot to bring discredit upon the Company and to ruin the whole trade, it was decided to complain to the Privy Council and bring about punishment of the offender.

King Charles's attention being duly gained, the Company was notified that His Majesty would not see it so harassed in its trade. Smethwick, rebuked by the monarch, gave in, ultimately acknowledged his offences and promised never to repeat them. But he long continued a malcontent member.

Such dissensions and bickerings could hardly fail to have a most discouraging effect upon the Company. It petitioned Parliament to examine closely

into its affairs, especially its relations with the Dutch, and if it were found that the trade were profitable to His Majesty and his kingdom, the Company begged for encouragement. If otherwise, let the Company be dissolved. The King, as may be imagined, little relished this appeal to Parliament, and sent Lord Carleton to assure the adventurers of his protection and of his complete satisfaction with the Company.[1]

The Company had maintained that the great losses it had lately sustained through the Dutch were the cause of its trade being so unprofitable, "for whereas they had formerly divided two and three for one, their £100 stock had fallen 20 per cent., and was then not worth more than £80". In an answer of the Company to a petition of Smethwick there is a valuable summary of the state of its affairs. The Court of Committees there aver that they had sent out fifty-seven ships of 26,690 tons, besides eighteen pinnaces to be used for trading from port to port in the Indies. For reloading these fifty-seven ships they had sent in money and goods £1,145,442, and there had been raised in the Indies £289,643; in all £1,435,085. They declared their readiness to prove that during the last four years, *i.e.*, from 1624 to 1628, they had sent "means suffitient to relade home all the ships they had sent out". But even if this were not so, they were blameless, because the generality had not paid in above £40,000 per annum, whereas in former years they had paid in

[1] *Calendar of State Papers*, East Indies.


TE COLVI VIRTVS VT REM, SED NOMEN INANE ES.
Sr. THOMAS ROE Kt. Embassador to the Great Mogul, Grand Signier, Kings of Poland, Sweden & Denmark, the Emperor & Princes of Germany at Ratisbon; Chancellor of ye Garter & Privy Councellor.
Obt. An. D. 1644.

£200,000. So that the Company was not only obliged to continue great sums at interest, but its credit failing upon its own seal it was forced to supply upon individual credit and bonds £80,000, which disheartened and dismayed the Company's treasurer. It had besides to pay £20,000 per annum interest on a debt which, in June, 1628, was £230,000, and in March, 1629, had increased to £300,000.

But Charles was not to extend his favour and protection for nothing. He summoned the Governor and explained to him his urgent need of money. If, said he, £10,000 were not forthcoming from the Company in three weeks it might endanger the loss of Rochelle. To this most unexpected request Governor Abbott replied that never could it have come less opportunely, that if it became generally known it would completely overthrow a new subscription for the prosecution of the Indian trade. Nevertheless, it was the King's wish that it should be brought before the Company. The Court decided bluntly that it was impossible to gratify the King. They had not the money, and even if they had, it was not in their power to lend. And so the Governor was obliged to make their humble excuses to His Majesty, and to beg a gracious interpretation. But Charles did not overlook the rebuff, albeit for the moment he dissembled.

The saltpetre the Company was now importing in large quantities for the purpose of converting into gunpowder was soon to be a more valuable asset than either King or Company dreamed of. As

an expedient for adding to its profit the Company had established powder mills in Surrey. Owing to the frequency of explosions, these mills became far from popular, and the inhabitants petitioned the King to have them abolished. Charles, suspecting another motive for the apprehension of his subjects, prudently granted their request. But he permitted the Company to erect new mills in the more thinly-peopled localities of Kent and Sussex. The Company's powder would be smelt by both Royalists and Parliamentarians.

Meanwhile the Dutch ships were still held hostages at Portsmouth; the Dutch Government, abandoning a policy of indolence, began actively to negotiate for their liberation. The detention of the vessels, they urged, would hardly accelerate their decision to do justice in the Amboyna business. The delays which had arisen had been due to the distant situation of those concerned and other unavoidable causes; and finally they proposed (in July 1628) that if the three Indiamen were released special ambassadors from Holland and deputies from the Dutch Company should be sent to England within two months, and that speedy justice "should be done on the business of the judgement at Amboyna".

Charles and Buckingham saw fit thereupon to set free the Dutch vessels. There were perhaps other and less public reasons for this decision. It was rumoured that the King had received a gratuity of £30,000 from the owners of the vessels, and the Dutch themselves freely hinted that they

had obligingly taken His Majesty's jewels out of pawn.[1]

During the whole time of the detention at Portsmouth every possible effort had been made by the Company to obtain redress in Holland. It had even sent over to that country the survivors of the massacre, who had there languished in straitened circumstances, managing only to obtain an audience twice in eighteen months. Supremely disgusted at Charles's abandonment of the only tangible guarantee of redress it resolved to send no ships to India until those already sent had returned. The Company fixed upon Persia as the great field for its future operations, pending a working arrangement with the Dutch in the far East.

It seems to have been recognised by the Company that its action in memorialising Parliament and slighting Charles had been imprudent. On the former's dissolution, without any notice having been taken of its petition, the Company presented itself to the King praying for a renewal of its charter. This time it accompanied its prayer with arguments which popular rumour declared to have been so effectual in the case of the Dutch. Charles seems to have been sensible of this dutiful attitude on the part of the Company. He was now in the severest straits for money. He could not go on with the war against France and Spain, and there was nothing for it but to conclude a humiliating

[1] Another current report said that Charles had received a bribe of three tons of gold for the release of the ships, a "great discouragement to the Company".—*Calendar of State Papers*, East Indies, 1625-29.

peace with those countries. He expressed himself as favourable to the Company's request.

The directors were well aware that they sailed between Scylla and Charybdis. If they were properly to navigate their ship it must be by virtue of good and strenuous seamanship. After calling in the balance of the old subscriptions, which amounted to no great sum, they united these with a new subscription known in the Company's annals as the Third Joint Stock, amounting to £420,700. They also directed their efforts to reform in domestic administration and to the repression of private traffic by the officers and seamen. On this latter point application was made by the Company to the King, who issued a proclamation "restraining the excess of the private or clandestine trade carried on from and to the East Indies by the officers and sailors in the Company's own ships". This royal proclamation is interesting because of the information it yields us of the merchandise lawfully imported and exported by the Company in the second quarter of the seventeenth century. The latter consisted of "perpetuanoes and drapery (broadcloths, etc.), pewter, saffron, woollen stockings, silk stockings and garters, ribands, roses edged with gold lace, beaver hats with gold and silver bands, felt hats, strong waters, knives, Spanish leather shoes, iron and looking-glasses," while the former comprised "long pepper, white pepper, white powdered sugar, preserved nutmegs and ginger myrabolums, bezoar stones, drugs of all sorts, agate heads, blood-stones, musk, aloes, ambergrease, rich carpets of Persia and Cambay, quilts of

satin, taffeta, painted calicoes, benjamin, damasks, satins and taffetas of China, quilts of China embroidered with gold, quilts of Pitania embroidered with silk, galls, worm seeds, sugar candy, China dishes and porcelain of all sorts". Such were the staples of the Company's trade: the articles in the one category it sent out to the East; those of the other its ships brought in return to England.

The notable omission of cloves and cinnamon in the above list brings us back to the struggle for life on the part of the English in the Spice Islands. Despite the protests of the Dutch the King of England's letter to the Pangran of Bantam[1] was duly delivered by the Company's factor there. It created a favourable impression. The Pangran was just then at war with his feudal chief, the Materam of Java (who was fighting the Dutch), and had in consequence been forced to conclude a peace with Coen's successors, stipulating that the Dutch should defend the port by sea. All these recent hostilities had, as might be expected, seriously interfered with the cultivation of pepper throughout the district, and although the English factors congratulated themselves on their re-establishment in Bantam, in spite of their trade rivals, they were yet obliged to face a present absence of profits for the Company. But if the supply of pepper had diminished since the expulsion of the English from Bantam in 1619, other staples bade fair to take its place. The natives had recently employed themselves in the cultivation of

[1] Otherwise the "King" or "Rajah". The letter is dated 24th March, 1629.

rice and sugar-cane, which were found to yield a greater profit than pepper, besides which, the trade at Macassar was improving and 200 tons of cloves had been secured from that station. This supply would ordinarily have gone to the Dutch, only they were fully occupied by the war with the Materam of Java. This potentate had besieged Batavia with an army of 80,000 men, and although repulsed by the Dutch Governor-General, hostilities were merely suspended and the Materam continued in the field.

But at least the Company's servants had shaken the dust of Batavia from their feet. Their unhappy joint tenure of that place was a tale of much suffering and many indignities, and they looked back upon it with sentiments of revulsion. In removing to Bantam, the empty title of President and Council which they had continued so long to retain they abandoned for the inferior rank of agency. They placed themselves, together with the Coromandel Coast factories, in subordination to the President and Council at Surat. In this new situation they were allowed to draw upon the Presidency at Surat for money and goods sufficient to carry on a moderate commerce.

Thus it came about that all the Company's factories in the East were placed under the controlling power of Surat. The factors here had just before this had the good fortune to gain signally the amity of the new Mogul. Captain Swanley had been appointed commander of a fleet of five ships to proceed to sail to the Persian Gulf in an endeavour to revive and increase the trade with Persia and to

interfere as much as he could with the Portuguese there. In brief, Swanley was ordered to lay hold of all vessels of that nation he met, and if he found any force in the neighbourhood of Ormuz he was unhesitatingly to attack it. It so happened that Shah Jehan ardently desired to send an ambassador, Kherat Khan, and his suite to the King of Persia. The journey would, in the usual way, have been attended with great danger; but the Surat Council, learning of the royal intention, handsomely offered to convey Kherat Khan on board Captain Swanley's ship, and to treat him with due attention and respect. This courtesy naturally drew the Mogul to consider the Company's ships: he decided that they were the most efficient force he could employ against his enemies, the Portuguese. To gain their assistance he therefore granted a firman to the English, which reached them on the 5th of April, 1629. It authorised them to make reprisals on all Portuguese ships whether on sea or in port within Shah Jehan's dominions; adding that he would require the assistance of the English ships in the following season. The factors, quick to perceive the advantage which this would give them to improve their trade throughout India, lost no time in despatching all the Company's ships to England, with full and valuable cargoes, and entered into contracts for cloths at Ahmedabad, Broach and Surat, aggregating £100,000.

The Dutch watched this growing commerce of the English with dismay. They felt that some measures must be instantly employed to repress it. They first tried that method that had been be-

queathed to them by the Portuguese—intrigue—to weaken this new connection between the English and the Mogul government. This failing, they resolved to resort to the mercantile scheme of depressing the stock and credit of the English throughout India. To accomplish this they reduced the prices of their European goods and advanced those of their purchases, selling the former at a loss and giving such high prices for Indian produce as to cause a great commotion amongst the natives. This ruinous scheme was so far successful as to reduce the funds of the Company at Surat, and oblige them to abandon temporarily all idea of establishing new factories on the Coromandel Coast.

In September, 1630, five of the Company's ships, heavily laden with goods and money, were attacked by the Portuguese fleet at Swally. The Viceroy of Goa in the month of April, flushed with joy at receiving a reinforcement from Europe, consisting of nine ships and 2,000 soldiers, projected the recapture of the island of Ormuz. He first applied to the Governor at Surat, imploring that nobleman to use his influence with the Mogul to banish both English and Dutch from his dominions. He did not stint the most flattering offers; but his cool proposition that the Portuguese should replace the banished traders and enjoy the exclusive trade at Surat met with little favour. Nothing daunted, the Viceroy, hearing of the arrival of the English ships, resolved to prevent their entrance into Swally. A sharp naval action, followed by frequent skirmishes both on sea and shore, was the result.

Without being decisive the advantage was certainly with the English, and Don Francisco Continho was unable to prevent the landing of the English cargoes. After this, although the factors at Surat had to struggle against the revived power of the Portuguese for some years, the trade there continued to make rapid strides.

Meanwhile a rebellion had broken out in Persia on the death of Shah Abbas, which threatened the Company's interests. Its agents had just congratulated themselves on obtaining two firmans allowing them to convey silk from Ghilan to Ispahan when the stores of that fabric in the former place were indiscriminately plundered by the rebels. The Company was not the only sufferer on this occasion, as the loss of the Russian merchants, whose goods were at the same place, were said to amount to £45,000. Moreover, all the contracts and grants which the traders had wrested from the late Shah became void unless confirmed by his successor. At present they had to be satisfied with an order for 200 Persian soldiers to proceed to Gombroon, to protect the English factory and shipping against any onslaughts on the part of the Portuguese. Although the envoy of that nation had insinuated himself into the good graces of the Khan of Shiras and secured a trade concession, yet Shah Sufi, the new sovereign, was well affected towards the English. This amity was soon demonstrated, for towards the close of 1631 the Shah, on the promise of an annual bribe of fine cloths and cutlery valued at 500 tomans (£1,500 sterling) to

himself and principal officers, confirmed all the former firmans to the Company. At the same time the Dutch, having incurred the displeasure of the monarch, lightened the hearts of the English factors by their disappearance from the scene. They hovered about on the Persian borders, however, ready to avail themselves of any fluctuation in the tide of events which should dislodge their opponents, or give them an opportunity to partake of the royal favour.

Before reverting to the Company's affairs at home, there remains for us to glance at the English trade on the Coromandel Coast. It will be remembered that in order to recover from their commercial embarrassments, the English and President in Council at Batavia had in 1626 fixed upon a station at Armagon. A piece of ground had been furnished from the Naik on which a factory was erected, and ordnance mounted to protect the Company's property and servants from the depredations of either natives or Dutch. It was not originally intended that this factory should be other than subordinate to Masulipatam. But the oppressions of the native Governor decided the English factors to abandon the latter station, which was done on the 27th September, 1628. The Company's servants did not quit the post, however, without sending a report to the Governor explaining why they had abandoned the factory, and vowing they would not return unless the King of Golconda, in whose dominions Masulipatam was situated, himself granted a decree to trade there. The new

factory at Armagon was fortified with twelve pieces of cannon and a guard of twenty-three factors and soldiers, but the rainy season played such havoc with the defences that a few years later it was found necessary to rebuild the fort.

Of the manner in which the Company was robbed by its servants in the East much has been written, but it was not altogether immune from theft at home. In 1634 a system of robbery was exposed in a curious manner. Four of the Company's porters at the Royal Exchange had just pilfered a bag containing about ten pounds of pepper from the Exchange cellars, where that commodity was kept. The bag, which one of them had "conveyed into his breeches," burst by accident and the pepper running out at his knees betrayed him at Leadenhall. All the pepper conspirators were dismissed, and it was ordered that thenceforward a master-porter was to be at the scale where the pepper was weighed, and another upon the pile of sacks, to be answerable for the honesty of the working porters.[1]

At Blackwall two of the Company's servants were indicted for stealing beef, pork and other stores. Another system of robbery was "the cutting open bales of calico," which the factors at Surat thought was done by the carriers between Surat and Persia. The real culprits were afterwards found to be the "Blackwall longshoremen—our servants in the long boat were the thieves that rip open and purloin from the bales of calico". A raid made by a

[1] *Calendar of State Papers*, 1634.

constable on the house of a man in Blackwall brought to light forty-four pieces of such stolen goods.

In the period between 1629 and 1634 we find that the Company employed thirty-six ships to carry on its trade, one of which, the *William*, carried 160 mariners. Eight of these vessels were newly built or purchased within the period. To build a new ship of 600 or 700 tons was estimated to cost from £5,000 to £6,000, although one, the *Expedition*, of 260 tons, cost the Company only £1,420.

CHAPTER VIII.

Parliament, Pepper and Patronage.

THE negotiations from which the Company hoped so much, between itself and the Hollanders, still dragged a dreary length along. King Charles was daily showing himself more at variance with the body of his subjects. He had refused to summon a Parliament, and to obtain the necessary supplies had re-established monopolies and exacted heavy tributes on exports and imports. Laud and Wentworth were just beginning that policy which was to plunge England in blood, and to hoist themselves and their royal master on the scaffold. At such a period the King's counsellors had, of course, but little time to spare for the affairs of the East India Company, or little force to compel its enemies to come to terms. In October, 1633, the Privy Council held repeated conferences with the Dutch envoy and examined the directors of the London Company. The Dutch were sorely afraid that if the business were not settled their ships would again be seized, and they sought some method of propitiating the English and so gaining time. They were successful; they demanded that the claims of the Company should "be not dealt withe in a generall manner and as a whole; but article by article," and to this demand the King's advisers acceded.

In vain the Company protested against further procrastination. It did not dare urge its own fears that the Dutch were well aware of the unsettled state of England and were verging on a civic crisis to allow them to escape scot-free from all pains and penalties. Yet while overruling the London merchants, the Privy Council could not refrain from observing that "in their Lordships opinions it hath been a greate impertinencie in the Netherlanders to stand so obstinately upon the scruples touching the manner of the treaty concerning the differences of the East India Company and theyres".

The Company now saw that it had nothing to gain from the Court. It ceased its applications and remonstrances and began to devote itself solely to retaining such privileges as it had already obtained. The gaunt shadow of evil years to come was plainly before the merchant adventurers. The Dutch power was already rising; the authority from which it derived its own monopoly was steadily dwindling. But whatever private political opinions the members severally entertained, they were eminently successful in repressing all outward display as a body. Some were doubtless partisans of King Charles for reasons in which sentiment mingled as largely as business. But as to the desire of the Company, as a whole, to see the King established in power and authority, there can be no reasonable doubt.

The Company soon found itself obliged to reduce its expenses "in regard its business grew every day less and less". A "person of quality" presented privately to the Governor a note pro-

pounding that the great salaries of some of their officers be lessened and others be spared. So at a Court of Committees in July, 1634, a list was presented by the secretary of all the Company's officers and servants, with their particular salaries. Mr. Tyne's, the book-keeper's, salary was reduced from £100 to his "former proportion" of £80, "in regard to his extraordinary pains of keeping several books for the particular voyages is now almost past". But the pains were again required two months later when the accounts of these voyages were turned over to the Third Joint Stock. Mr. Handson, auditor, was willing to relinquish his place, which would be a "cessation" of his £100 per annum. "The salary of Richard Mountney, son of the East India Company's 'husband,' was likewise 'recalled,' as also the salary of £50 of Mr. Ducy, timber measurer, who, in future, was to be paid, when employed, by the day, so that the total amount thus abated, with the 100 marks of copper remembrancer 'extinguished,' was £256 13s. 4d."

But it was not so easy to cut down wages abroad, certainly not to control the earnings of its servants. There it was either a grave or a fortune—sometimes both; and the humblest found ways of turning a penny.

Several of the chief agents or "presidents" in the Company's service at this period were of signal ability. One such was Thomas Rastell, an old servant who had returned home in 1625 and was sworn a free brother of the Company. He returned "President in India" in 1630, where, about a year after, he fell a victim to the prevalent mortality.

William Methwold had also been in the Company's service before for seven or eight years, and when again "entertained" expressed a hope that he should not go "either as a blind or dumb man in the Company's affairs". He then held the office of sword-bearer to the City of London. The Court of Committees "held him every way fit and able for the place of their President," and worthy of £500 per annum, the largest salary ever yet given.

Methwold, like most of the chief servants, had the pen of a ready writer. His epistles were exhaustive. He sent home in 1633 an account of the Company's affairs which fills thirty-six closely written pages. "But," says Mr. Sainsbury, "I think Gibson takes the first place for the lucid and business style of his numerous letters on the Company's affairs in Persia." Weddell, who had also been long in the Company's service, had a high opinion of this Gibson. He told the Company he would "sin against his duty not to let them understand that Gibson is an able and discreet man, much respected by the nation, and well beloved by the King, and Company's affairs like to prosper with him". We shall shortly have occasion to see whether this praise was deserved or not—whether its utterer was himself above reproach.

Altogether, there were now 190 factors in the Company's service, but the great mortality in India extended also to very many of the Company's servants there. No fewer than forty-eight factors fell victims to the ravages of the prevailing sickness or pestilence, so that Sainsbury estimates that probably 140 factors only were employed at the

same time in seventeen factories in India and at three in Persia and along the coast, about the same number as were in the Company's service at the close of James I.'s reign. It was no easy matter, with all the care exercised by the Court of Committees at home, to select factors fitted in every way for their duties. The bulk of the servants were indeed competent, well fitted for their posts and "deserved well of the Company," but, in spite of every precaution, jealousies and differences broke out occasionally amongst them. Some were accused, and not unjustly, of "intemperate" living, a word of great significance, meaning not want of sobriety only; others of "pride and gorgeous apparel," some of being "lewd and debauched," and some of gambling, which seems to have been not an uncommon vice.

In this period of financial stress there was yet another direction in which the Company did not seek to save. It did not retrench in its charity.

The Company was a liberal contributor to the necessitous poor. Besides maintaining almshouses at Blackwall and Poplar, it built a hospital at Poplar, which it endowed "with lands and other provisions". It entreated a committee "to take this religious and pious work into their serious thoughts," when the Court would be ready to join with them in such a course "as may be to the honour of God and the relief and comfort of the poor". Every Christmas time it distributed a sum of money to the poor of Stepney, "poor widows upon whom the Company usually bestowed its benevolence for their relief and comfort against this blessed time now approaching,"

and beef and pork and biscuits were also distributed amongst the poor of Blackwall and Poplar, "as formerly hath been accustomed". The poor of Ratcliffe and Limehouse were treated in like manner, and its almsmen at Poplar also received "a chaldron of sea coals at 20s. as yearly accustomed". The inhabitants of Blackwall greatly desired the Company to build a chapel to their hospital at Poplar, but it was conceived "more proper first to raise such a stock as may amount to 60s., or 100 marks per annum for the buying of lands to maintain the poor, in regard there was already a chapel in the hospital for their almsmen, and then to think of building a chapel and not before".[1]

Happily for the future prospects of the Company at a time of such great mercantile depression, its factors in Persia found means to turn the attention of the Company to trade in that country, and of inducing many members to underwrite for large sums of money to furnish ships for voyages to Persia. The Shah's firmans and contracts for silk, for which the

[1] There were other little expenses at this time which the loyal Company did not stint. King Charles sent more than one letter to the Company signifying his pleasure that they should write to their factors to furnish him with some "varieties" from the East Indies and Persia. As a patron of art and literature he was well known to his subjects, and the Company's factors "endeavoured their utmost to accomplish what his Majesty required". Living "varieties" were also sent home to the King. Captain Weddell brought from the Indies a leopard for His Majesty and a cage of birds for the Queen, and he desired leave to present them in his own name; but at a Court of the East India Company it was "conceived more fit to present them as from themselves"; wherefore they resolved to attend the King "and make this presentment".—*Cal. State Papers.*

Company were to deliver three parts in merchandise and one part in money, was one of the chief inducements to undertake these voyages, although after some debate it was afterwards resolved that the ships should trade at Surat and Bantam, as well as in Persia. Forty-five out of the forty-eight adventurers were for a second or new subscription, to which divers had already subscribed £500, £1,000, £1,500, and some £3,000 each. The total subscription for the new stock amounted to £125,000. The "New Adventurers for Persia" were originally bound to underwrite for not less than £200 per man, but when a new subscription was agreed to for a second voyage it was reduced to £100, the limit of £200 having been complained of as too great a sum.

At Surat the Company's traders had so far retained the favour of the Mogul as to continue to enjoy his protection, and a firman was granted in February, 1634, for liberty to trade in Bengal, on condition that the Company's ships resorted only to Pipli. They took advantage of this concession, and thus the first traders entered the Ganges and those provinces which were afterwards to furnish the most lucrative commerce of the East India Company, and to be the seat of its prouder dominion.

The Company's loyal affection was soon to be sorely tried. While it was dutifully standing aloof from the mass of merchants on 'Change in a violent protest against custom-taxes, a Groom of the Bedchamber was conspiring with one of its own faithless captains to invade its charter and rob the

East India Company of its hardly acquired privileges. The origin of this plot was in the East.

For a number of years past the chief efforts of the agents at Surat had been directed to establish a trade between the West Coast and Persia, leaving the trade of Bantam, Sumatra and the Coromandel Coast to struggle on as best it could with scanty supplies of goods and shipping. But it soon appeared that they had by no means bounded their energies either to the Persian trade or to the general interests of their employers. At Agra they had bought a quantity of indigo, for which no sale could be found, and as other goods could not be had, necessity clearly suggested some arrangement with their rivals in a different district to procure goods of a more marketable kind. The Dutch were clearly out of the question; their demand for such spices as they brought to Surat were altogether too high.

But the Portuguese, hitherto inimical, had many reasons for not declining to listen to the friendly proposals of the English. Overtures were accordingly made to the Viceroy of Goa, who was hard pressed for shipping wherewith to procure pepper from the Malabar Coast. He received the idea of a truce with favour, and in consequence an agreement was negotiated during the summer of 1634. Henceforward, under the agreement, the Portuguese ports were to be open to the English, and the English and Portuguese factories were to act on friendly terms with each other. If the Crowns of the two countries did not see fit to ratify this arrangement, six months

were to expire before relations should resume their former footing.

The person who had the chief share in devising and carrying out this ingenious arrangement was John Weddell, a bold and enterprising but not too loyal servant, who had been many years in the Company's employ. Weddell, as one of the leading participators in the fight at Ormuz, was the same who had given evidence on his return from Persia of the Company's profits in that transaction, testimony which proved very agreeable to King Charles and the Duke of Buckingham. Latterly he had been implicated in a plot for wholesale private trading, which the dissensions of the plotters had nipped in the bud. Returning again to England at the close of this year, Weddell obtained an interview with Endymion Porter, one of the Gentlemen of the Bedchamber at Whitehall. This personage, who enjoyed exceptional favour with his monarch, was then somewhat past the flower of his age.

A recent writer[1] characterises him as "poetaster, courtier, speculator, virtuoso, patron of the Muses, a sort of Jacobean echo of Elizabethan Philip Sidney with Zutphen left out". But the great pertinent fact at this period of his career is that he was, like his royal master, impecunious. Porter received the sanguine sea-dog cordially, and expressed his willingness to further his schemes.

Weddell likewise consulted two enterprising capitalists and company promoters of the day—Sir Wil-

[1] Sir William Hunter.

liam Courten and Sir Paul Pindar—into whose ears he poured the details of a project for establishing a separate trade to the Indies by virtue of the arrangement concluded with the Portuguese. The main idea of the scheme, as originally put by Endymion Porter before the King, was the export of goods to the Portuguese settlements in India and importing Indian produce from thence. In other words, the rivalry between the East India Company and the Portuguese in India was to go on as before, all the advantages accruing from the "truce" being reaped by a new and different set of English traders. The Company would then be left to struggle on against an additional weight of opposition and rivalry in the form of its own countrymen.

This scheme looked so promising that both Courten and Pindar very naturally offered to embark money in it. The royal consent alone was necessary. But this did not, even to King Charles himself, appear an easy matter, in view of his previous charter of monopoly of all Indian trade to the Company. Some skill was therefore required to devise a show of right for the contemplated invasion of the Company's rights. When the treacherous Weddell learnt of the difficulty which baffled King and courtier he laughed loudly, boasting that he knew a short way out of the wood. He promptly drew up a series of allegations against the Company, in which, as his late comrades and fellow-servants in the East averred, "not a fraction of truth did subsist". In spite of all the East India Company and its servants had done, of the money

it had spent, the hardships endured, the pains and penalties incurred; notwithstanding all that chapter of strenuous and sanguinary striving in the Spice Islands, in Persia, in Japan, and on the peninsula of India, it found itself in 1635 charged with gross dereliction of duty—with being a parcel of sordid *fainéants*, whose one idea had been present profits at whatever cost.

Thus did Weddell cut the Gordian knot. Upon such grounds did Charles grant to Sir William Courten and his associates in the new enterprise the right to share in the trade of India, the monopoly of which the Company had now enjoyed for a period of thirty-five years.

In vain did Governor Abbott, that "faithful, white-haired man," supplicate Charles at Whitehall. After waiting for hours in the ante-chamber he had indeed slipped his petition into the royal hand, but the royal eye had not deigned to see, and the royal head had not even vouchsafed a simple nod. The Governor went back crestfallen to Crosby Hall, and at the next General Court asked the Company, not for the first time, to choose another in his stead, one "more able and worthier," for he was weary of the treatment he had received from the King and of its reproaches. In the following year the generality granted his prayer, and Abbott retired, to his fellow-directors' regret. His worth was soon afterwards attested by his being chosen Lord Mayor of London.

Apart from the members themselves, nobody seems to have been particularly indignant at the

invasion of the Company's charter, albeit a good many stout partisans of Parliament were unaffectedly surprised. These had fancied—and some had not scrupled openly to assert—that the Company and the King were in a conspiracy, the one to do without Parliamentary grants, and the other to furnish the means to resist Parliament. It was said that the Company paid the King a huge annual pension, although how this fact could be reconciled with his treatment of the Company throughout the Dutch controversy was only explicable on the ground that the burghers of Amsterdam paid him a still larger pension. Sir William Courten got his charter, and although his death followed soon afterwards, it did not affect the project, which was practically carried on without hitch or hindrance by Weddell acting in the name of Courten's son. Four ships were equipped and sailed away to the Indies, leaving the merchant adventurers, from their habitat at Crosby Hall, to remonstrate delicately with the King, and to write fiery letters to their servants at Surat and elsewhere.

In the meantime these servants at Surat, oblivious of what was happening at home, were doing their utmost to improve the opportunities which Weddell's truce afforded them. As both parties recognised the advantages of joining forces against the Dutch and natives, it was not difficult to induce the Portuguese Viceroy to take another step forward in the direction of reciprocity. The Company's chief agent, William Methwold, went himself to Goa and was cordially received by his late enemy. A bargain was soon

struck, and on the 20th of January, 1636, the joint signatures were affixed to a formal convention on the basis of the Anglo-Spanish treaty of 1630. In future Surat was to be the *entrepôt* for a great Indian carrying and port to port trade, the ships for England being limited to four annually. On Methwold's return a new factory was founded at Scindy and another was being projected at Dabul when the advance guard of Courten's Association, consisting of two ships and two crews of discharged Company's servants, appeared first in the Red Sea, afterwards spreading dismay amongst all the Company's men in the East. Their first act was to seize a couple of native junks belonging to Surat and Diu, plunder them, torture the crews and sail away, roaring out a glee in full chorus and in approved buccaneer fashion. For such an outrage it was clear some one had to pay. Accordingly the Mogul no sooner heard of it than he marched a regiment of soldiers against the English factory at Surat, laid hold of Methwold and his companions, and, after casting them into gaol, promptly confiscated the Company's property to atone for the losses inflicted. Until 177,000 rupees were paid, the Company's factors remained two months in gaol.

The main body of the interlopers, commanded by Weddell himself, made its appearance off Surat very soon after Methwold's release. Having had no intimation of what had taken place in England, the astonishment of the President and his companions may be imagined when several pompous documents were placed in their hands notifying them of the

King's new East India project and of Weddell's connection with it. From King Charles's letter they learnt that six ships under the charge of Weddell and Mountney had been sent on "a voyage of discovery to the South Seas," in which the King had a particular interest. The Company's agents were desired in case of distress to afford these vessels every assistance. The Council of Surat were naturally plunged into the deepest doubt how to deal with the new arrivals. They could not credit, they said, the story of a new East India Company having been chartered without their having had some inkling of the business; such a thing as two commercial companies from the same country was incompatible with the pursuit of Oriental trade, as they understood it; in short, they were in such moral distress over the matter as to leave them scant time or inclination to attend to any business this season at the factory. At the close of it Methwold set sail for home, with a comfortable fortune, but worn out by his long service.

On his part, Weddell, fixed in his desire to create a favourable impression upon his patrons by a profitable cargo, sailed away to Goa, where he delivered King Charles's letter to the Viceroy, and was granted permission to hire a house and land his goods. He traded where he chose, used his English and Portuguese authority as he listed, and finally returned home with valuable cargoes of silk and spices. Charles and his favourites, who supported a new enterprise so damaging and unfair to the old Company, were rejoiced at Weddell's success,

and hearkened complacently to the Company's angry protests that its commerce was being ruined and its devout prayers that the King would grant no new privileges to Courten's Association. But both petitions and remonstrances fell on deaf ears. Porter and his friends were too near the throne to be baulked in their projects. In June, 1637, a new grant was issued to Courten's Association, by which the King confirmed the former privileges and allowed them to trade for five years to all places in India where the Company had not settled any factories or trade, to carry out £40,000 in gold and silver bullion, and to be free of export duty on all Indian goods exported abroad from the kingdom. Weddell had settled a factory for Courten's Association at Baticala and contemplated other settlements on the Malabar coast and in the adjacent islands. The Company's agents were warned off these places on pain of King Charles's displeasure.

This was not all. The Company, as we have seen, had clung to the Persian trade, as affording compensation for its losses. Now the Persian trade unexpectedly began to languish. The mortality amongst the servants had been dreadful. Many had died a few weeks after setting foot in the country. The fidelity of most to the interests of the Company was touching. They gave orders for the purchase of silks, the making up of bales, the loading and unloading of horses, mules and camels from the sick couch, even issuing directions from an open litter, when the approach of the last mortal

rigour was only too apparent. But the worst blow to the Company came from William Gibson, chief agent at Ispahan, who died in 1637. On examining his books it was discovered that he had proved a traitor, if not, strictly speaking, a defaulter, since he had lent the Dutch £12,000 to enable them to compete with the English. This they did so effectually that, although the money was eventually repaid, the Company's losses through Dutch competition were severe. Moreover, it lost the confidence of the Shah and his advisers, who had taken a dislike to the Hollanders—a healthy prejudice in which they were not wholly without warrant or example throughout the East.

Not satisfied with their dealings with Gibson, the Dutch had borrowed money on a far grander scale from the Armenian merchants in Ispahan, and this sum—equivalent to £100,000 sterling—they were unable to repay. The Armenians, who by virtue of their riches stood well at the Persian Court, promptly applied to the Shah to stop the export of silk by the Hollanders until the debt should be discharged. The debtors thereupon grew frightened, and managed to raise £35,000 to propitiate the Armenians. But this was not enough, and the injunction they prayed for was granted. In other circumstances than those in which Gibson's duplicity and venality had unhappily placed it, this would have been the Company's opportunity. Fremlen, who had succeeded Methwold at Surat, did indeed arrive in Persia and endeavour to draw profit out of the enemy's discomfiture, and to recommend a new

and better system of trade. But the outlook for maintaining a hold on Persia from this time forth grew less and less promising.

On his second voyage for Courten's Association, Weddell visited Goa, where he left factors to fix a regular trade. Afterwards he sailed to Baticala, established a similar agency there and proceeded to Achin, where he procured a grant for a factory and laid in a supply of produce in exchange for bullion. Not yet equipped, Weddell set sail for Canton, where he encountered such hostility from the Portuguese and Chinese that in revenge he attacked a native fort and plundered it of seventy bales of merchandise. After this exploit Weddell escaped to Masulipatam. Here, although able to refit his ships and obtain some goods, he was not allowed, in spite of his dire threats, to establish any agency. Albeit he served his purpose by fixing one at Rajahpur, in the King of Bijapur's dominions, midway between Bombay and Goa.

No wonder, therefore, that watching their affairs at home, in India, in the far East, in Persia, what with the jealous enmity and intrigues of the Dutch, the Portuguese and the natives, the sturdy merchant adventurers meeting at Crosby Hall felt their affairs to be in a critical posture. But if it be inferred that they wholly lost courage and patience it will be to misunderstand the Company's character.

"We could wish," they say, in their general instructions to the President and Council at Surat, "that we could vindicate the reputation of our nation in these partes, and do ourselves right, for the losses

and damage our estate in those parts have sustayned ; but of all these wee must brave the burden and with patience sitt still, until wee may find these frowning times more auspicious to us and our affayres."

The times continued to frown, although more than once relief seemed to loom upon the Company's horizon. Courten's Association had launched forth with a great flourish, and its first voyages were a pronounced success. But the difficulties in the way of its continued competition with the Company were greater than had been imagined. The Dutch, for example, showed its ships small mercy, and after one or two catastrophes the directors of Courten's Association began to breathe overtures for conciliation, even of amalgamation. Charles, too, came at length to realise that his action had been hasty, and that, in the troublous times whose shadow loomed so large before him, he had more to expect from the larger body of London merchants than from Courten, Pindar and Weddell, whose financial position was—thanks to His Majesty's inroads—far from secure.

In 1639, after repeated representations on the part of the Company, the King was induced to appoint a Committee of the Privy Council to examine the whole matter of the Anglo-Indian trade. On the 10th December of that year, Charles announced publicly his decision to revoke all patents formerly granted for "plantations beyond the Cape of Bona Speranza and grant no more of the same kind". Courten and his fellow-adventurers should have a reasonable time to withdraw their settlements and bring home their goods and shipping. A new

subscription should be formed by the Company for carrying on the trade on an extensive joint stock, after which His Majesty said he would be pleased to renew its charter.

Of course, the real reason of Charles's benevolent intentions towards the Company was a bright pecuniary hope. He foresaw that if such a subscription as he counselled were raised, he could count upon a handsome proportion of it in his necessity. From Courten and his friends little was to be expected, even if they were given a free hand. They were too dependent upon Weddell, who might take it into his head any day to break with them as he had broken with his former employers, even to confiscate their ships and goods.

But the Company welcomed relief on any terms. Its Governor, Sir Christopher Clitheroe, retired from Whitehall, with many expressions of gratitude for the royal favour, to set about making up the required subscription. It was not an easy task. The Civil War was now close at hand. Capitalists were distrustful—bent rather upon hoarding their possessions than on adventuring it, even in foreign trade. But by the King's own action was the subscription rendered impossible. Not being able to wait for the Company to re-organise, and at his wits' end for funds, Charles sent an order to Governor Clitheroe obliging him to sell to the Crown all the stock of pepper in the Company's warehouses, which was being held for better prices. This amounted to 2,310 bags, or 607,522 lb., and at 2s. 1d. per lb. would fetch a sum of £63,283 11s. 1d.

The Company could have no reason in not desiring His Majesty for a customer, or to dispose of its pepper on such favourable terms. The true cause of its chagrin lay in the circumstance that the King's purchase was on credit, that the King's throne (if the Puritans were to be believed) already tottered, and the royal pepper-buyer could never discharge his debt. Yet there was nothing but to submit with the best possible grace.

So the pepper was duly turned over to the farmers of the Customs, who, with Lord Cottington, signed four bonds of £14,000 each and one of £7,283 in the Company's favour, promising that one would be paid regularly every six months. The pepper was then immediately sold by the King's order to various merchants at 1s. 8d. per pound, the sale realising £50,626 17s. 1d.

Thus at a critical moment was the royal exchequer replenished. Perhaps no incident of those times better illustrates the shifts and devices to which the King was forced to resort than this purchase of pepper from the East India Company. It almost seemed that the body which sprang from the royal prerogative should sink with the latter's decay. The expected subscription to the Fourth Joint Stock failed, of course; and there was nothing for it but to inform the King of this fact and to apply for other regulations for the salvation of the Company's trade to the Indies.

Yet, in justice to the King, it must be allowed that the misgivings felt by certain of the Company and by many of the political wiseacres of the day

did not enter at all into Charles's calculations. He designed no injury to the merchants by expropriating their pepper. He had done his best to borrow the money direct; but neither from the East India Company nor from any other source could he procure the needed sum. He had all but ruined several of his loyal adherents, including Endymion Porter. Sir William Courten had lent him £200,000, of which his son and heir now stood in dire need. He had in vain attempted to obtain supplies from the House of Commons, who would not even listen to the proposition until he had first rectified the public abuses of which they complained. But Charles had a firm faith in his ultimate solvency, and Lord Cottington was allowed to pledge his honour and his lands that the pepper bonds would be duly paid.

The months wore on: the Company had not received a farthing of the debt; although, it is true, the sum of £13,000 had been deducted from the Customs dues, a way of discharging pecuniary obligations which, however much it might commend itself to the King and the Company, promised not to be equally acceptable to Parliament. The Company met and drew up a resolute letter to the farmers of the Customs, demanding immediate payment of the moneys due to them, under threat of arrest. The alarmed farmers of the Customs applied to Lord Cottington, who had induced them to sign the bonds. While this correspondence proceeded several of the Company's ships arrived in port, laden with goods upon which, in ordinary course, a further £12,000 would be levied by the King. By the royal

order this was deducted as before. But this time Charles had departed for Scotland, and Parliament had something to say in the matter. As it required the money itself it promptly took measures to compel the Company to liquidate its obligations in cash. In so awkward a situation, between two fires, the merchant adventurers had no alternative but to enforce payment of the bonds they held to recover the price of their pepper. Poor Lord Cottington, all but penniless, realised that he was ruined unless the King came to his assistance. Charles, pitying him, wrote to the Treasury Commissioners, from York (12th April, 1642), and also to the Company, endeavouring to propitiate both until the royal tribulations were over.

The Commissioners' reply was hardly sympathetic. They stated that there was now owing by King Charles to the Company about £54,000. For liquidation of this debt they suggested that his Majesty had some parks which were of little use and great expense, some of which might be sold in fee-form, reserving a small rent to the Crown. The King's rents, for example, of the manors of Bradbury and Hilton, in Durham, produced £500 per annum and might be sold for £9,000 or £10,000. As for the rest of the money, assignments might be made on the timber and soil of the Forest of Dean, which was valued at £7,000 a year. We may anticipate sufficiently to say that twenty years later the debt had not been repaid; three years after the Restoration the Company were glad to settle the business at a loss of £31,500.

The failure of subscriptions to the projected Fourth Joint Stock, which was to become the source of the renewal of the Company's charter and privileges, we have already described as due largely to the pepper episode. But although, since the Civil War had begun, Royal charters were at a discount, it was necessary to find some means to carry on the trade unless the merchants intended to abandon it altogether to the interloper. They therefore quietly formed, in 1641, a new subscription amongst themselves amounting to £105,000. This they cautiously described as being for the purpose of a First General Voyage. It was to be kept quite distinct from the capital previously adventured, and in its letters to agents at Surat, the Company specified the proportions of this £105,000 which was to be applied to obtain investments at the different factories. They were to increase the purchase of Coromandel cotton goods, the sales of which at Bantam would, it was hoped, enable the latter station to enlarge its investments in pepper and the finer spices.

The Company's trade was to be maintained at Surat, which, in spite of the troubles at home, was growing yearly more prosperous.

As for Persian silks, the Company wrote that no more were to be purchased, because, owing to the "convulsed and austere manners" of the Roundheads, the price of that article had fallen as low as to render the trade almost worthless—"a melancholy example," says the Company's annalist quaintly, "of the effect of political anarchy on commercial prosperity".

CHAPTER IX.

The Sword of Damocles.

ENGLAND was being torn with political dissensions, and the prospects of the Company at home seemed gloomy enough. The trade in the East fluctuated from month to month, sometimes favouring one set of traders, English, Dutch or Portuguese, sometimes another. The recreant Weddell's achievements naturally increased the activity born of competition.

In 1640 the Kingdom of Portugal, after sixty years' bondage to Spain, obtained its freedom, an event calculated to exercise considerable influence on Portuguese commerce in India, upon which the ceaseless efforts of the Dutch had inflicted the severest injuries. Owing to the recent English alliance with the Viceroy of Goa, the Dutch impudently asserted the right of search over the Company's ships on the Malabar Coast. As the Surat factors had neither shipping nor authority to assist their allies under the Convention, Fremlen wrote to the Company that, unless reinforcements arrived, Goa was in danger of falling into Dutch hands. Nor were the Company's servants better able to resist the encroachments of Courten's Association, *alias* John Weddell, who had, as we have seen, erected factories at Baticala and Carwar and settled at Rajahpur, where the Company had a factory.

On the Coromandel Coast it soon became plain that, in spite of the favour in which they were held by the King of Golconda, the Company's men, unless they could obtain a better situation than Armagon, would not be able to hold out against the Dutch, who, besides trading at Masulipatam, were entrenched at Pulicat, in a district famous for its cotton goods. The Naik, in whose territory Armagon was situated, had caused the Company's servants such constant trouble, that they had been driven entirely to abandon the idea of making this wretched settlement their chief place on the coast, and had returned to Masulipatam. A few factors were, however, left behind at Armagon to carry on what trade they could pick up, which was scant enough. At their head was Francis Day. Day, realising that the game was not worth the candle, was eager to make a change. If he could but secure the protection of a friendly Naik, he was prepared to build a fort of rude materials and brave the displeasure of his superiors, who were naturally opposed to this form of extravagance. At first he thought of Pondicherry or Kunimedu; but hearing of the Englishman's design in the spring of 1639, Ayappa, the brother of the Naik ruling the coast territory between Pulicat and St. Thomé, the Portuguese settlement, offered him advantageous privileges if he cared to establish himself at his port of Madraspatam. Whereupon Day, having obtained permission of Thomas Ivy, the agent at Masulipatam, promptly made a voyage thither, and inquired into the commercial possibili-

ties of the offer. He arrived on the 27th August, 1639, and "was entertained with much honour by the Naik himself, merchants, painters and weavers". He found to his delight that everything fully came up to his expectations. The Naik's territory was "the only place for paintings so much desired" at Bantam, and "there was likewise greate store of long-cloth and morrees" to be had, 30 and even 40 per cent. cheaper than at Armagon or Masulipatam. The Naik, who seemed to be anxious for the foreign traders to build a fort, into which he could retire in stress of political weather, duly issued a grant of privileges to his visitor. With this grant Day hastened to Masulipatam, where he found Ivy replaced by Andrew Cogan, who, however, received favourably his subordinate's proposals. A delay ensued, owing to inability or unwillingness to raise money; but Francis Day's persistence overcame obstacles: he even promised to guarantee the interest on the proposed loan, and finally set out to make arrangements for the removal of the Company's factory from Armagon to Madras. The building of the fort was begun soon after Cogan had joined Day, about the middle of February, 1640, and the inside walls were doubtless finished on the 23rd April (St. George's Day). Soon 400 families flocked about the fort to procure employment in calico weaving and chintz painting. The completion of the fortifications proved costly, and, by 1642, 10,000 pagodas had been spent and Fort St. George was still unfinished. The garrison then comprised some thirty-five English, and about the

same number of blacks. While Day was absent in England during this year the headquarters of the Company on the coast were moved hither from Masulipatam by Cogan, who then took charge of the building operations.[1]

As has been premised, the Company viewed with considerable apprehension, not to say extreme displeasure, this very enterprising proceeding on the part of Francis Day, backed up by Cogan and the Masulipatam Council. Owing to its peculiar circumstances at home it had no relish for fort building, or any expense which would not return an immediate profit. Considering the signs of the times in England, where nothing, certainly not the English Constitution, seemed stable, one can hardly blame the merchant adventurers in Leadenhall Street. But the business was far too advanced to draw back now. When the Company charged the Surat Council with complicity in the disobedience of Masulipatam, they wrote denying their responsibility for the action of the coast factors, but added that, "by what we have heard of it, the fort is conveniently enough scited, and may serve you to many good purposes". But the coast servants themselves were far more enthusiastic; they strongly supported Day's action.

"In the first place," they wrote, "it is our opinion, with regard the Moors and Gentues are false and not to be trusted, and that at all times you may command your own upon all the coast, 'tis very necessary you have a place to retire to under your own command."

[1] See *The Founding of Fort St. George, Madras*, by William Foster. 1902.

A little later they wrote "that when Fort St. George was finished and 100 souldiers for the defence of it, wee need not feare any inland enemy neare unto us in these parts".

In these letters from Cogan and his colleagues concerning the fort at Madras we find first adumbrated that political situation on the Coromandel Coast which was afterwards so deeply to engage the talents and energies of the Company's directors and its servants at Madras.

"Your worshipps, wee perceive, have never been truly informed with the Government of Karnatt, for our Naique hath no more to doe, or is more cared for, where the *Eagle* was wrackt, than is the Pope of Rome; nor is that Naque respected here. For your worshipps may please to understand that every naique is a king in his own country, and will attend the greate Kinge at their pleasure," and then follow the prophetic words, "which will be the losse of this country."[1]

But by far the bitterest experience of any of the Company's stations in the East during Charles I.'s reign was suffered by Bantam. Cut off by many

[1] A committee was appointed by the Court to review the whole question of the building of Fort St. George without orders, and on 13th May, 1645, finally reported that while it was "a very indiscreete action to goe about the building of such a Fort when the Companies stocke was soe small, yett if ever the Companie have a plentifull stocke it may bee very comodious and advantagious for them; and since it was the joynt act of all the factors there, and not soly or particularly of Mr. Cogans, and if it should not proove so advantagious for the Companie hereafter it can bee charged upon noe man more justly than on Mr. Day; and this Committee were joyntly of opinion to cleare Mr. Cogan of this charge".

thousand leagues from Europe, in the midst of enemies, and neglected by its nearest friends, it struggled on vainly to avoid extinction. When no ships came to relieve them, the factors hid their heads in mingled shame and wrath; when ships came, as often as not they brought no money, and occasionally only scanty supplies of calico goods from the Coromandel Coast. Once, after considering whether it would not be better to close their factory and retire to the new settlement of Madras, it occurred to one of their number to borrow several thousand reals from a number of Portuguese merchants at Bantam. With this fund they managed to invest in 1,300 tons of pepper, which they sent home, and so took heart again. But their new-found courage speedily deserted them when the Company in due course came to acknowledge the news of this transaction. They were denounced as blockheads and blunderers; the loan they had negotiated with so much difficulty was peevishly condemned, and the whole body was threatened with dismissal.

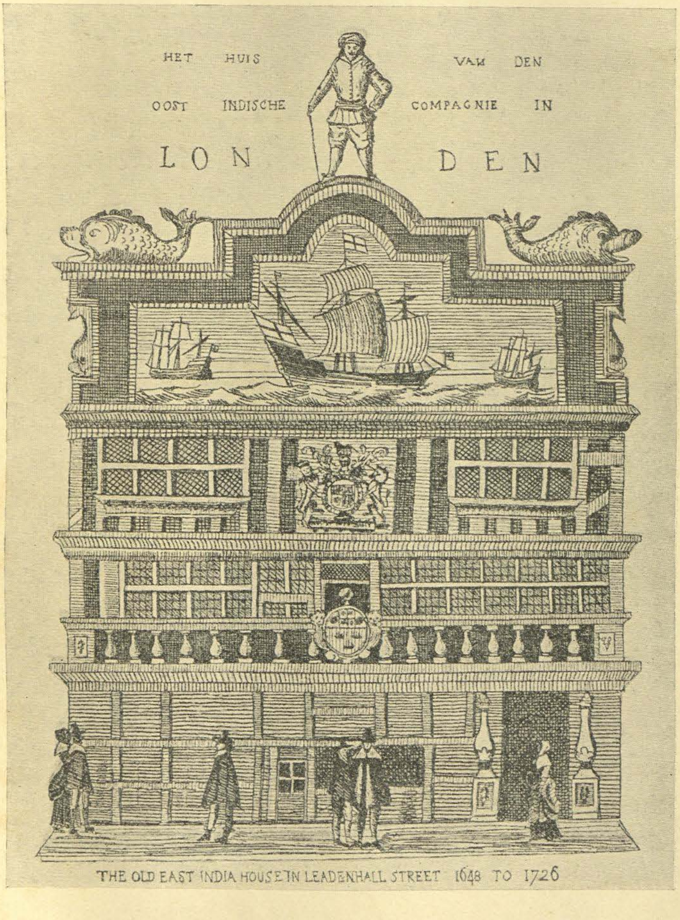
In the opinion of the poor harassed Court of Committees Bantam and the Coromandel Coast would soon have to give up the ghost; the only trade that seemed at all promising was that between Surat and Persia. The next season the Court changed their tune. There was little to expect from the Surat-Persian trade after all. The Company had "most to hope" from Malabar and Bengal. One year they would write to one set of agents in terms of commendation; but so surely as

a cargo fell off in quantity or an ill report was received, so surely would the directors fluctuate in their judgment, and indulge in threats and chidings. In brief, during this critical time, the English Civil War, the Company, like many other bodies of men, lost its head, and seemed as little to know what it wanted as able to devise some reasonable means of getting it.

In 1643 the third of the Company's great Governors, William Cockayne,[1] was chosen at a General Court of the merchant adventurers. His predecessor, Sir Henry Garraway, was a Royalist, obnoxious to the Parliament and removed from office by their order, Cockayne, a rich Turkey merchant and a sturdy Commonwealth man, being more acceptable. The new Governor, in these parlous times, was exceptionally fortunate in having at his right hand a man of such wide practical knowledge of the Indian trade as William Methwold, one of the first of the Company's servants to return wealthy from the East.[2] After twenty-five years of life in ships and factories he devoted himself to the Company's

[1] Governor Cockayne, as Hunter points out, is often confused in the *Calendar of State Papers* with his kinsman, "the magnificent Lord Mayor of London".

[2] William Methwold, nephew of the Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer in Ireland, served his apprenticeship in Middlesborough, and went out to Surat as a servant of the East India Company in 1615. Indefatigable in trade and in travel, he visited the factories on the Bay of Bengal and was the first Englishman who explored the mines of Golconda. During seven critical years (1631-38) he guided the English fortunes in India as President at Surat. His letters urged the disheartened Company to plant itself firmly on the Bengal Coast.—Hunter, *British India.*



THE FIRST EAST INDIA HOUSE.

From a Dutch Print.

service at home, in the capacity of Deputy-Governor. Through a period of feebleness and indecision of their employers at home, the Company's servants went about their business with commendable zeal and caution, knowing that their own fortunes depended upon their efforts to maintain the English trade, which their enemies were doing their best to weaken and destroy. The Dutch, for instance, had taken to bribing the Mogul on what was then deemed a gigantic scale. In case the throne should become vacant, they also made presents to the Mogul's sons, either of whom might prove the successful competitor.

It is amusing to learn at this day that these splendid bribes which so alarmed the Presidency at Surat were valued at only about 9,000 rupees. "This circumstance," says the Company's annalist, "marks also the low state of the Company's funds, when the Presidency informed the Court that, on consultation, it had been resolved to make this advance of money, to follow the example of the Dutch, and make large presents to the Mogul and his sons, to induce them to grant to the English similar firmans to those which the Dutch had acquired."[1]

Besides their measures to gain the favour of

[1] When we recall the huge sums which were afterwards paid as *peishcush* in the Carnatic, it is interesting to know from Cogan's letter from Madras, 25th August, 1643, that "the Piscash sente our Naique, or rather the King, thereby to have our Priviledges confirm'd" consisted of seven yards of scarlet, sixteen of green and sixteen of red cloth; ten maunds of sandal-wood, three looking-glasses and one chest of rose-water!

the Indian Government, Van Dieman, the Dutch Governor-General of Batavia, at this time attempted to come to a pacific arrangement with the Portuguese at Goa, the basis of which was the cession by the latter of the island of Ceylon. But as the Dutch had recently been defeated there the Viceroy very properly rejected these overtures to a treaty.

Van Dieman, however, persisted, and the following year (1644) a treaty was concluded, by which the prizes taken by either were to be given up and half of the cinnamon ceded to the Dutch. This arrangement was naturally most damaging to the English, because it introduced unexpected Dutch trade into Portuguese ports, and caused a competition for such articles as the English had lately controlled under the terms of the Goa Convention. From a seemingly trivial incident which happened at this time great results were afterwards to spring. The surgeons of the English ships had acquired, for their skill in curing the disorders of many of the Mogul's officials, a considerable reputation. Assalet Khan, a nobleman of high rank, applied to the Presidency to recommend a surgeon to reside at Agra, to minister to the various bodily afflictions rife at the Indian Court. The agents were not long in making a selection. A young surgeon, Gabriel Boughton by name, said to have been trained at Guy's Hospital, London, and attached to the Company's ship *Hopewell*, was appointed. Boughton afterwards became surgeon to the Viceroy of Bengal; he established an influence with that Governor

and was able about 1650 to obtain a licence for free trade by the Company in Bengal.

In the meantime where was Courten's Association? Weddell was now dead, but there were plenty of successors; and even a number of persons in England ready to put money into the concern. They had a number of ships, some of them, it is true, leaky and in vile condition, but ably commanded by reckless, unscrupulous men, and these sailed back and forth in the Indian Seas, trading where they could obtain a famous bargain, plundering where they could or would not trade, resorting to as many devices as their fertile brains would suggest or their easy virtue permit. We have spoken of their ships as intrepidly navigated; but the commanders did not always come off scot-free. Numbers were lost. In 1644-45 the *William* was wrecked 180 leagues from the Cape, in full sight of a Company's ship, which, taking the wrecked vessel's cargo and crew on board, carried them to Surat. Here the agents honourably gave bills for the cargo and the remains of the wreck, and, as a means of recruiting the Madras garrison, took Courten's men into its service. This episode, far from placating the leading spirits of Courten's Association, seems to have increased their hostility and their desire to interfere in the Company's trade. For example, the Surat Presidency sent the *Hind* on a voyage of experiment to Macao and Manilla, under Thurston and George Oxenden, with letters of recommendation from the Viceroy at Goa. Courten's agents got wind of this, procured by means of

bribes similar credentials, and sent one of their own vessels in the wake of the *Hind* to share any benefits which might accrue. Closer still they followed up the Company in Persia, and nearly ruined its trade at Gombroon by deceitful means. Yet, despite all its schemes and energy the credit of Courten's Association in the East steadily declined. The wild projects to which the members resorted began to press heavily on the trade of Dutch and Portuguese as well as the English Company. As a sample of their wisdom, in 1645 they formed a plan of establishing a colony at St. Augustin's Bay, in the island of Madagascar. From this point they hoped to embarrass the trade of all rivals; but such a project was far beyond their finances. The colony was overtaken by dire distress. At another point, one of Courten's ships, putting in at Mocha, would have been seized for old customs' dues had it not been relieved by the Company's agents, who charitably advanced a sum of money to enable her to leave port. As an instance of their loyalty to their masters, one of Courten's men, in charge of a factory at Carwar, actually offered to dispose of it to the Presidency of Surat; but the offer was declined.

The principal necessity from which the agents of Courten's Association suffered far more than the Company—want of cash—grew daily more pressing. In spite of their handsome promises their bills were dishonoured and their agents flung into gaol for debt. In this predicament they had recourse to the ingenious and infamous expedient of counterfeiting reals and pagodas. A gang of Indian counterfeiters, led

by a couple of nefarious Europeans, fixed themselves at Madagascar, supplied with metal and implements, and in the profusion of base coin which soon poured forth from this island a remedy seemed to have been devised to render Courten's merchants superior to ill-fortune and the vicissitudes of trade. The fraud was soon detected ; the merchants of the East, who had parted in good faith with their goods, broke into a wail of indignant anger. They appeared before the native magistrates charging the English with having cheated them, although punishment could not readily be inflicted upon absentees. By such behaviour was the English name tarnished and a severe blow inflicted upon the Company's trade in favour of its rivals.

In vain the Company's agents held to the Persian trade in the hope of betterment. Things at Gombroon went from bad to worse. The leading cause of that decline we have seen : the diminished request in England of the leading Persian staple. Its agent was obliged to explain to the Shah the distracted state of his country, "which the rigid and austere manners of the Republicans had rendered silks (an article of former luxury) less an article in demand than under the polished manners of a Court".

Again, Dutch competition, harassing as it was, had at least been in the open market. Now, however, the employment of force was resorted to to compel the Persians to give them an exclusive right to the trade of the country. It was a bold measure ; but it succeeded. Bringing a large fleet into the

Gulf in the autumn of 1645, the Dutch Commodore, Block, landed at Kishme and commenced an attack on the castle there. The alarmed Shah and his Vizier offered to make peace. Block was received in gracious audience at Ispahan, and obtained the licence he desired to purchase as much silk anywhere he pleased in Persia, and export it free of duty. But Block survived his triumph of arms and diplomacy only a few days. He was found dead in bed one morning at Ispahan, the Dutch believing he died from natural causes. His successor followed up the advantage over the Company, and with a fleet of eight ships landed at both Bussorah and Gombroon, and almost completely ruined the English trade there. It was probably saved from extinction by the declaration of war in 1645 between the Shah and the Mogul. An invasion of India was projected, and during the subsequent hostilities merchandise, which had hitherto proceeded by land between those kingdoms, was now perforce despatched by water. Both Dutch and English shipping was therefore in demand and a proportionate profit derived by each.

While the flames of war were thus bursting out in the East, the long civil strife which had been desolating England was slowly terminating in a bloody catastrophe.

King Charles was brought a prisoner from the Isle of Wight to Windsor and then to London, where he was tried and beheaded. This tragic event was felt in the remotest corner of the world where the English had interests. Nowhere were its

effects more apparent than where the East India Company bought and sold.

On the eve of the King's death the Company was called upon to exercise a degree of caution greater than had ever before been demanded in its history. All Governor Cockayne's prudence was needed. Self-preservation dictated to the merchant adventurers—to all but to a few over-zealous Cavaliers—a course of extreme guardedness lest any act or word of theirs should thereafter be used as a weapon in the hands of either regicides or loyalists to assail their privileges. By the tactful terms of the Company's new subscription in 1647 it drew from the Parliamentary leaders an acknowledgment of its rights and the importance of the Company's trade to the realm. All its despatches to the servants abroad were secret, being marked "to be burned". Consequently no trace remains of these documents from which we might glean the true sentiments of the governing body on the event which had just shocked the civilised and even the semi-barbaric world. The servants in Persia reported the effect there on the Company's trade of the "tragicall storye of the Kinge's beheadinge". Yet it is a little surprising that it should cause the bloody-minded Shah and his nobles "to consider the English as a base, contemptible, unworthy nation". The factors at Ispahan and Gombroon had full reason to apprehend that these "nobles would, from this circumstance, seek occasion to break the league between the English and the Persians, and deprive them of their moiety of the customs at Gombroon which

had hitherto been collected in the name of the King of England ".

Naturally, the Dutch sought to derive capital from the tragedy by representing the English as all regicides and traitors. The Company's servants at Bantam, seeking trade in pepper, had despatched a ship to Padang (Sumatra) and Indrapore on a voyage of experiment. Success attended the venture ; the ship completed her cargo. But on leaving Indrapore she was accosted by two large Dutch vessels, sent purposely from Batavia. These Dutch crews had the hardihood to board the Company's vessel and forcibly extract the whole of the pepper obtained at so much pains and expense, the leader of this outrage informing the English captain that the Dutch had now the exclusive right from the Queen of Achin to all the pepper on the coast. When complaint was made to Batavia, the Dutch Governor-General coolly announced that "the English were traitors and had no King, and that he would do them all the injury in his power ".

In response to an application which the Company made to Cromwell's Council of State, praying that "in the interest of the English people" (a safe plea under any form of Government) countenance should be given to the Company in preference to Courten's Association (which body had now adopted the name and title of the Assada Merchants),[1] the Council recommended both parties to take steps to come to some mutually satisfactory arrangement. The

[1] So called from their plantation on Assada Isle, Madagascar.

Assada Merchants, at whose head was the Lord General Fairfax, professed their willingness to follow this advice, but proffered terms too extravagant for acceptance by the Company.[1]

For instance, the Company was against embarking on the Guinea trade, which the Assada merchants seemed to consider so promising. That it should allow the latter permission to trade from port to port in India was also rejected. Other proposals the Company was, though reluctantly, prepared to agree to. As to the plantation in the island of Assada, its opinion was that it could never be useful owing to its proximity to Madagascar, which had already proved so fatal to Portuguese, Dutch and French, as well as to English traders. Moreover, it was more than 2,500 miles from the

[1] "The day after the Parliamentary vote," says Hunter, "the two associations proposed to form a 'United Joint Stock,' which should take over the factories in India, and continue to trade for three years. But in vain the Company's beadle went round to the freemen with the subscription book. Money would not come in, and extraordinary methods were employed to raise capital. The Company sent letters to thirteen of the port towns of England inviting them to join; and blank subscription books, with a preamble setting forth the nature of the adventure, were humbly laid before Parliament and the Council of State. The members of these honourable bodies would not venture a penny; and even the offer of the freedom of the Company, once so valued, failed to tempt the general public. The thirteen port towns were equally unresponsive. The Governor had to announce that replies had been received from only Bristol and Exeter; and there seemed no likelihood of money being obtained from that source. The Assada Merchants, having barely funds to carry on their own business, could furnish but little to the new Joint Stock. With such sums as its own exhausted members might subscribe, the Company struggled on." But the gross sum subscribed was, nevertheless, £191,700. See *Bruce's Annals*, vol. i.

nearest factory of the Company. Still, if the Assada merchants persisted in the notion, "it should not," said the Company, "prove a stumbling-block to the negotiations for amalgamation". The other side waxed less unreasonable: other conferences were held, and on the 31st of January, 1650, Parliament passed an Act ordaining "that the trade to the East Indies should be carried on by one Company and with one Joint Stock, and the management thereof to be under such regulations as the Parliament shall think fit and that the East India Company should proceed upon the articles of agreement made between them and the Assada merchants on the 21st of November, 1649; till further orders from the Parliament."

Thus was the tension in one quarter loosened; a large sum in United Joint Stock was raised, and two ships, with cargoes and £60,000 in bullion, despatched none too soon to the Indies.

On the strength of this new understanding with Parliament, the duration of which could of course not be predicted, but which was at least as stable as any which had subsisted between the Company and King James or King Charles, an attempt was made to regulate from London the internal management of the two leading factories or Presidencies in the East, Surat and Bantam. At the former post, the President and Council had, besides their allowances, been permitted to trade in articles not handled by the Company. Their private transactions soon extended to commercial speculations altogether outside their duties. Of course there could be but one result.

Gradually the chief servants had grown negligent of the affairs of their masters. These were commonly "so depressed or exalted by their private reverses or gains as to interfere with their understanding". More than one was driven to suicide : several became mentally unbalanced. The remedy applied was obvious. Captain Jeremy Blackman was sent out as President at Surat for five years at a salary of £500 a year. There were to be no perquisites and no private trading. Blackman was instructed to put the Company's affairs throughout the Presidency on a sound basis, to cut down expenses and generally to promote efficiency and profits. As it was desirable to learn at first hand exactly what was the condition of affairs at Assada, the new President was ordered to halt at this island and examine the prospects and report confidentially upon them. Blackman did so : he found the colony of Assada in a sad state. Before his arrival disease had reduced the colonists to so small a number that the survivors offered to resign the place to the Company. Elsewhere at Rajahpur, Weddell's successors had offered to transfer their interests to the Company, and the Rajah of Bijapur had seized one of their ships for a debt.

All this time, as may be supposed, the Dutch commerce, influence and armaments were increasing throughout the East, from Ispahan to Firando. The seas swarmed with their cruisers, no fewer than ten ships with full cargoes were anchored in the Persian Gulf. Having no domestic disturbances to weaken their energies, all their efforts were bent upon crush-

ing out the competition of the English and the Portuguese. As the Company's factors could not compete with such capital and such force as the Dutch could command, there was nothing for it but to direct their chief attention to points where the rivalry was less keen. This was the opportunity of Madras. At Madras the Dutch were certainly handicapped by the disfavour in which they were held by the reigning Moslem sovereign. Even the Portuguese lost ground with the Hindu coast chiefs, as the following instance will show.

Upon the original establishment of Fort St. George by Day and Cogan in 1640 the Portuguese of the neighbouring settlement of St. Thomé had generously lent their help and the two settlements remained on the best of terms, although their methods both of trade and treatment of the natives bore little resemblance to one another. One day a Catholic padre refused to allow a procession of the Hindoo religious ceremonies to pass his church. The native priests and worshippers were furious and an outbreak was narrowly averted. The English factors were called upon to approve of this piece of Romish bigotry, but wisely resolved to avoid giving offence to the natives, even though it might cost them the amity of their fellow-Europeans. "You may judge," the chief at Madras wrote home, quaintly enough, to the Company, "of the lyon by his paw, and plainly discerne what small hopes and how much danger wee have of converting these people, which are not lyke ye naked, unlernt Americans, but a most subtle and pollitique nation,

who are so jealous in their religions or rather superstitions, yet even amongst their owne differing casts is grounded an irreconcilable hatred, which often produceth very bloodie effects."

In such favour were the English at Madras held in 1651 that the King of Golconda actually offered to go into commercial co-partnership with them for the purpose of trading to Bengal, but this offer the agent and his Council prudently declined. Two years later Madras, hitherto a subordinate agency to Bantam, was made into a separate Presidency by the Company. Albeit in 1654 orders came from home to reduce the establishment to two factors with ten soldiers as garrison for the fort, which was still, in the harassed Company's eyes, proving too expensive a luxury. But a few years more, as we shall see, and Madras's period of humiliation would come to an end, and Francis Day stand forth fully justified in the Company's history. In Europe the Company was finding out its avenger.

In 1651-52, when Cromwell was making up his mind to war with Holland, one of the reasons adduced by the Council of State for such a course was the long-continued oppression suffered by the East India Company. Wherefore Amboyna and Pulicat still rankled in the public memory. Between 1650 and 1652 the Company had thrice presented a petition to the new Council of State praying for redress of grievances from the Dutch. This petition was accompanied by a statement of losses since 1622, amounting to £1,681,996, besides interest, which more than doubled these figures. The Com-

pany not only wanted money, it said, but it wanted also powers under the Great Seal of England, for its servants in India, to enforce obedience to the English law and punish offenders, which it had lacked the right to do ever since Courten's shipping had penetrated into the Eastern parts.

Not only was a Dutch war probable, but Blake's chase of Prince Rupert into Lisbon harbour threatened hostilities with Portugal. If such an event as this took place it would involve grave risks in the East, for which the Company's servants were warned to prepare themselves. The Presidency of Surat resolved to act on the defensive. They had no force of any kind to grasp the torch of war in their own hands, and the Portuguese stations were strongly fortified. Such a situation was not agreeable and very precarious, and their sole consolation was that the Surat trade was then thriving, not merely for themselves but for the Company. They had completed their investments for the Mocha, Persian and Bantam markets to the amount of £70,000, though the profits at those stations by no means corresponded to the magnitude of the capital involved. So far they "had been able only to provide 350 tons of saltpetre" for England. Of the gunpowder which this represented good use—or very effectual use—was shortly to be made by Blake and his sailors. As to the manner in which the rest was utilised in Ireland and elsewhere let the melancholy history of those times speak.

In Persia the Company's trade was being pursued under difficulties which waxed greater year by year,

owing to the vigour and resources of the Dutch. At Madras the Company's parsimony continued to prevent the erection of fortifications so necessary to the security and dignity of this important post, whose commerce languished in consequence.

The magnitude of the Dutch fleets and cargoes in the Persian Gulf enabled an emissary they had sent to Ispahan to make large purchases there. But to this same emissary's request that the Dutch should be granted the same privileges as the English, the Shah returned a polite denial. "The Dutch," said he, "had not performed the same services to the King which the English had done." This was regarded by the English, and rightly too, as a signal triumph. Unhappily, not even the monarch's favour could build up the Company's Persian commerce to its old dimensions. It was, moreover, exposed to the inroads of the Portuguese should war ensue with that nation. Bengal was more successful, the factors there having obtained a firman for free trade, without payment of customs. This firman cost them a trifle of 3,000 rupees, which they soon expected to be reimbursed in saltpetre alone. It was common talk that the Dutch annually shipped about 3,000 tons from Pipli (where the English had first obtained leave from the Mogul to trade) and an indefinite quantity of this food for cannon and carbines was known to be purchasable at Ballasore and Hugli.

While Blake and the Dutchman Van Tromp were coquetting militantly in the Channel, as a prelude to more bloody diversions, the Company at

home was busily making up its accounts of the Fourth Joint Stock for the purpose of merging it into the United Stock. This arduous task was effected at the close of 1652, when a General Court of Committees of both stocks was held and the amount of the Fourth Joint Stock made up to November, 1651, amounting to £30,246, laid before them. It was decided to pay £20,000 to the holders of the Fourth Joint Stock, as a part of the sums due to them, leaving the balance to be adjusted at a subsequent time.

With the rise of saltpetre the price of pepper had declined in Europe. The political quarrels and disturbances of the day supplied an inflammatory condiment cheaper and more effectual. The taste for spices followed the passion for silks: the product of the mines of Golconda might have lined the shop windows of Chepe without exciting the furious cupidity of the republicans, whose professions at least were austere and who gathered in their hundreds in St. James's to gaze at the pattern of a new cuirass. But the factors in India could not credit the change which had come over their fellow-countrymen since their own exile. It was difficult for them to grasp the connection of politics and the palate: nor could they readily divine that beef and venison, which had been seasoned heavily in the reign of Charles, could be devoured in all their native insipidity by the gentry of the Commonwealth. Disregarding, therefore, the express injunctions of the Company to sell all their pepper in India and to ship none to England, the factors at Bantam shipped huge quantities to London, for payment of which

they drew two bills, one on the Company and another on an Amsterdam merchant. Both of these bills the Company ordered to be dishonoured, and directed the Presidency of Bantam to sell the pepper in the country and with the money it might bring to discharge the debt they had incurred. This course was severe, but it was not unjust. "In future," added the Company, "we expect implicit obedience to our orders."

The Surat factors, waiting for intelligence of hostilities in Europe, were not placed in an enviable position. War was declared between the English and the Dutch. The native merchants were afraid of loading goods on board the English vessels for fear of their being captured by the Dutch fleets. Anybody found trading with the English was regarded by the Dutch as an ally of the former, and therefore an enemy of themselves. It was intolerable; and the least the Company's factors could do was to make representations at Delhi and pray for the Mogul's protection. This was granted, but was of only negative avail if they continued without ships and armaments. Almost despairing of being strong enough to maintain themselves at Surat, the Presidency now began first to cast its glances upon the island of Bombay as a fortified station, which could be obtained of its possessors, the Portuguese, for a reasonable consideration.

But the Company, whose deliberations were never hasty, was not content, now that war had actually broken out at last with their rivals and oppressors, the Dutch, to occupy a neutral position.

The chance of revenge was not one to be lost. Instead, therefore, of repeating its general complaints for redress of grievances, it presented a petition to the Council of State praying for permission to become parties in the war, and to send a fleet of armed ships to the East Indies. Thus it hoped to obtain by force reparation for those injuries which for so many years it had vainly tried to procure by negotiation. Its idea was that the Government should lend five or six frigates, the expense of outfitting and maintaining which was to be met by a special subscription amongst the members of the Company. But Cromwell had need just then for all his ships; none could be spared for even so beneficent and popular a purpose as making reprisals on the Dutch in the East. Nevertheless, the Council supported the Company's credit by paying in advance £10,670 for 110 tons of refined saltpetre which it agreed to fetch home from India.

In the month of March, 1653, a messenger made his way from the Dutch factory to the premises of the English Company at Surat. He carried in his hand a formal declaration of war against England. The English factors hoped to have met this by the protection of the Mogul; but that potentate, after considering the matter, refused to interfere in the quarrels of Europeans trading in his dominions. This decision seemed a death-blow to the English; every day brought an accession to the number of Dutch cruisers hovering off the port. But the Dutch were too cautious to risk an attack which might have involved them with the Mogul Government. They

contented themselves with establishing a damaging blockade and sending the bulk of the fleet to the Persian Gulf, with orders to intercept English shipping.

Fortune again attended the belligerent designs of the Dutch; the Company's ships *Roebuck*, *Lanneret* and *Blessing* were captured by the enemy; another, the *Supply*, was driven ashore, where she was totally lost. Such a disaster, of course, could only be interpreted by the Persian intellect in one way, and the English in consequence almost immediately lost prestige, which one of their agents sought to regain in quite the true Oriental manner.

News of a victory which an English fleet had gained over the Dutch off Portland having come to hand, the zealous agent ordered a transcribed and elaborated narrative of this action to be circulated at the Persian Court; he flew to the Grand Vizier with a countenance radiant with triumph, while at the same time a fellow-agent at Gombroon presented a similar account before the Shahbander. Thus was sensibly lessened the credit of their rivals, whose recent exploit appeared by contrast a very petty performance. Yet the danger of relying on mere Court opinions was to be avoided; a better course was to stand on the merits of ready money, leaving the factitious advantages of popularity and Court influence out of the question.

Peace with the Dutch loomed upon the horizon in 1654. The Company naturally supposing that its rights and privileges would figure in the formal treaty of peace, addressed the Lord Protector, in the

hope that he would lend it his support. If he was seeking to arrange the Indian trade it submitted that the town of Bassein and port of Bombay in India, and the Mozambique in Africa, would be convenient stations for the Company's trade.

The expectations of the Company were not to be disappointed. What had been refused to James and Charles was exacted by the stern policy of Cromwell. The hundreds of petitions lodged for thirty years with the councils of both Monarchy and Republic were not to be in vain. By articles 27 and 30 of the Treaty concluded on the 5th April, 1654, it was agreed that cognisance be taken in the following May of the Amboyna massacre, with a view to reparation, and also with regard to other losses and injuries inflicted by the Dutch. The statesmen at the Hague cavilled a little at the word "massacre," but ultimately consented to let it stand, adding, surlily, "as the Republic of England is pleased to term that fact". It was now necessary to arrive at the sum of damages: the Company claimed over two and a half millions; the Dutch had the excessive impudence to put in a counter claim of nearly three millions. After considerable heat, it was decided that the mantle of oblivion should cover past injuries and losses on both sides; that Pularoon should be restored to the English, and the Dutch pay £85,000 to the Company together with £3,615 to the heirs of the Amboyna sufferers.

There were three reasons why the Company did not unduly exult over its long-deferred triumph. The first was that the sum awarded was not large;

the second was that it was appropriated on the spot by the Protector as a loan. Another reason for the chastened joy which marked the mien of the adventurers was that the publicity of the award drew down upon them all that envy and rivalry which had been inert during the long period of their apparent tribulation. The worst of this opposition came from members of the Company itself, who petitioned the Council of State that the trade to the Indies might in future be carried on by a company operating on an entirely different principle. What they demanded was nothing less than that the members of such a company should have liberty to trade individually on their own account, to have their own capital, servants and shipping if they each so desired.

Such an arrangement, which the experience of the Company had shown to be to the last degree unwise, at this juncture threatened its whole organisation and privileges, indeed its very existence. As had been repeatedly pointed out to King James and his successor, *combination was the only method by which foreign competition could be met.* English interests in the East being one and the same, the real benefit and honour of the country demanded a joint stock, which they prayed the Protector would countenance and support. But the malcontents within the Company were not convinced. They argued that since the amalgamation of 1649 they had as a body and individually become possessed of an equal right with the original Company to the Indian trade. The matter was referred by Oliver

to a committee; but meanwhile the dissenting merchants began fitting out fourteen ships to carry out their own projects of a separate trade. They had taken the name and title of the New Adventurers. At their head was one Maurice Thomson, afterwards Governor of the Company. The committee found the business a difficult one to settle, and were obliged to remit it to the Privy Council. Governor Cockayne and his colleagues took this indecision as a bad omen; they feared the worst had overtaken the old Company, and actually despatched two special commissioners on a separate ship to the various factories in the East to reduce and, in some cases, to wind up its business in the East. Their domestic rivals, on the other hand, were filled with exultation. Thomson and the rest were confident that the Company's charter would be revoked, and comported themselves as the rightful heirs and successors of all privileges which the "king-made" East India Company had enjoyed for over half a century.[1]

[1] The separate "merchaunts"—*not* the Company (as is commonly stated)—petitioned Cromwell for a convoy of ships to bring home their goods, as late as November, 1657; which leads me to believe the coalition was subsequently effected.

CHAPTER X.

The Charter of the Protector.

FOR a whole year, while Cromwell warred with Spain and paused in his conflict with France, the fate of the Company's privileges,—its very life—hung in the balance. The task of disentangling the various threads of dispute was made more difficult by the chaos existing in the Company itself. Actuated by mercenary dread verging upon panic, individual members, whose conduct had always been subordinated to the Governor and General Committee, now rudely elbowed their way to the front, each with a petition and a demand for special consideration and special profits. The ears of the Lord Protector were deafened by the clamour of the proprietors of the several stocks. Not only did the present proprietors join in the chorus, but the heirs of the deceased owners of previous stocks put in a plea for a share in the £85,000 conceded by the Dutch, and the ownership of the island of Pularoon, which they emphatically declared belonged exclusively to them. Amidst so many conflicting claims little wonder Cromwell's advisers hesitated, and finally referred the matter to five arbitrators. Meanwhile, having occasion for funds, the Lord Protector had already applied to borrow the £85,000, and on promising the Company to

repay the loan in eighteen months, £50,000 was lent him "for State purposes". Some of the adventurers, more short-sighted than the rest, would have opposed the request; but their associates saw the advantage of being creditors of the Commonwealth; they recognised the present value of being acknowledged by Cromwell in their corporate capacity. At the same time they studiously concealed any hopes which may have lurked in their breasts, and gave it out publicly that they were sending out three ships to India for the purpose of winding up their estates.

The Company had, indeed, small cause for jubilation. Although the Protector had not revoked its charter or curtailed its privileges, yet he granted a commission to their rivals, the merchant adventurers, authorising them to trade in Africa and India. These enterprising persons having mustered the sum of £46,400, placed their affairs in the hands of a committee, in imitation of the parent body. Three ships (their boast of fourteen turned out an empty one) were sent out to Rajahpur, Surat and the Coromandel Coast in the spring of 1656. This enterprise, it may be added, caused hardly less chagrin amongst the Company's friends and servants at home and abroad than it did consternation in Holland, where it was thought merely the precursor of a strong and systematic attempt to subvert the Dutch East India commerce.

Too many warnings had the Company's servants in the Indies received not to be resigned to the fate which now reached them. Silently they got their

men together, told them of the position of affairs, and embarked the majority of them in ships ready to return to England. Certain of the factories were closed altogether; others awaited an announcement they regarded as inevitable, that the affairs and assets of the Elizabethan East India Company had been transferred to other hands.

Still the catastrophe was delayed. Another season elapsed and it yet remained undecided whether the East India trade was to be conducted by a privileged company on a joint stock, or whether a new body was to be formed, the members of which, like those of the Levant and Muscovy Companies, were to be permitted to trade each in his own capital.

The Company, over which Governor Cockayne[1] presided, not being interfered with, although expecting daily the blow to fall, proceeded quietly with its usual equipments, and having got leave to export £15,000 in bullion, despatched three ships to the East. The commanders were instructed to invest this amount in the "finest kind of India goods" and, particularly, refined saltpetre. Gunpowder was not likely to go out of fashion, whatsoever might befall silks and "King-made" companies.

About the time the ships were reaching their destination another appeal was made by the Company to Cromwell. This petition was referred first

[1] Cockayne's "indomitable resistance to opposition within the corporate body," says Hunter, "and to attacks from without supplied the one element of continuity in its history under the Commonwealth. The reconstitution of the Company on a wider and more permanent basis by Cromwell forms the best memorial of Cockayne's Governorship."

to the Council of State, by them to a select committee of their own number, and finally, as we shall see, back to the Council again. That this time a decision was intended was shown by the extraordinary care of the committee to acquire every particle of evidence on the state of the East India trade it could acquire. All persons concerned in that trade were ordered to attend their deliberations on a certain day. A full hearing was given to arguments of both sides, one for a united joint stock individual, and the other for free trade under a company, on separate capitals.

The utmost excitement was evinced when it finally became known that a decision had been reached by the committee. Late on the evening of the 18th of December, 1656, the tidings flew to Cockayne's house that a united joint stock was recommended, but that the recommendation had to be confirmed by the whole Council before it was placed before Cromwell.

On the 28th of January following, Governor Cockayne, the committees of the East India Company, and the principal merchant adventurers to the East Indies met in the chamber of the Council of State at Whitehall. The leaders of both parties addressed the President of the Council. The Council then retired, and on the following day confirmed the judgment of the committee. Twelve days later (10th February) the Protector signified his approbation of the advice tendered him by the Council of State, and the jubilant Company, snatched at the last moment from extinction, now felt that nothing

was left to complete its rehabilitation but a new charter from Oliver on the lines of the old granted by his royal victim.

Relief had come almost too late. Business was at a low ebb in the East. Wars and insurrections had disturbed the course of native trade ; the Dutch had overborne the Company in Persia, and in India had seized several of the possessions of the Portuguese. The new merchant adventurers and the private traders had contributed, by a general lowering of prices, to the desolation. The factories had been withdrawn from Bengal and Cambodia, and Bantam had been for a twelvemonth blockaded by the Dutch ; while Madras was besieged by the interlopers. But hope was not altogether lost. By fresh capital and good management the situation might yet be retrieved. Above all did the Company pin its faith to a charter ; and this the Lord Protector granted late in 1657. No trace of this instrument can now be found, although more than one historian has spent much time and labour in the quest. But its provisions are known to us,[1] and it occasions no surprise that the merchant adventurers, conscious of defeat, anxiously sought a coalition. Their overtures were favourably received (if indeed this was not stipulated by Cromwell), and no less a sum than £786,000 was subscribed to form a new Joint Stock for England's trade in the East.

All seemed now smooth sailing, but, alas, storms loomed up on both sides of the horizon. Scarcely

[1] Sir William Hunter gives what is very probably an accurate summary or abstract.—*British India*, vol. ii., chap. v.

had the Company proceeded to put its affairs into shape in India, rehabilitating Madras and making all the factories subordinate to Surat, than the death of Shah Jehan occurred. A civil war between his sons laid waste the provinces and brought the reviving trade in Western India to all but a complete standstill. The Presidency, in fact, did not dare to embark in much trade, much less plan for the future. It was, to quote the letter sent home, "equally dangerous to solicit, or to accept of protection, it being impossible to foresee who might ultimately be Moghul". In the midst of this bloody business the Shah of Persia took it into his head to invade the Mogul provinces, in the hope of being able to add territory to his dominions, or at least fill his treasury. This put an embargo on the Anglo-Persian trade at Gombroon, where the Company's factors kept possession of an empty factory only, while at Bussorah the Pasha did not leave them this, but confiscated both house and stores.

At this juncture it is entertaining to note that one or two bold spirits determined to profit by the carnage going on in the Orient, by supplying the belligerents with shells and mortars. There had found his way to Surat one Colonel Rainsford, a Roundhead adventurer, perhaps the first not connected with the Company who interested himself with the military affairs of Hindustan—at least, on land. Seeing that an excellent speculation in this direction offered, he managed to communicate with Rolt, a merchant adventurer then in London, to export to him three mortars and 20,000 shells,

which he contemplated selling at a huge profit to his friend, described as "Prince of Rajahpore".

Rolt received this communication at the very moment when England was stirred by intelligence of the great Oliver's death on 3rd September, 1658.

As soon as practicable after this event, Rolt sought the son and successor of the Lord Protector, and representing that Rainsford was a brave veteran of the Parliamentary army, secured a special licence for the exportation of the munitions of war to Surat. Such licence, an invasion of its recently granted privileges, naturally alarmed the Company. The passing of Oliver pointed the way to new trials, and this action of Richard Cromwell's seemed an augury of evil. The Company instantly applied to the Protector to prohibit all such illicit traffic, and at the same time directed the President and Council to seize on the articles and dispose of them on account of the Company. Not satisfied with this, which, however, was imperfectly carried out, the Company itself purchased several thousand pounds worth of ordnance, mortars, shells, etc., for sale to the highest bidder amongst the four sons of Shah Jehan. This was, of course, without prejudice, the Company remaining neutral.

Rainsford was too good a man and of intelligence too alert not to be useful to the Company; consequently, soon after the termination of this incident, very much to Rainsford's advantage, it made overtures to him to enter its service. The Company wanted to get possession of Muscat as a means of retrieving their languishing Persian trade, and to

this end it employed him to negotiate with a local pasha. Rainsford began his negotiations with success, but, as we shall see, the Company's Persian interests were too far gone to be bolstered up by such measures.[1]

The time ripened for the restoration of the English monarchy. The Company was obliged to proceed as cautiously at this critical juncture as it had done a decade before. It was felt safer to communicate with its servants in the East as discreetly as possible. No one knew what an hour would bring forth; a single letter—a single phrase—might, if subsequently revealed, inflict a mortal blow on its prospects. Instead, therefore, in 1659-60, of sending out instructions to its servants it wrote nothing at all of what was or seemed impending, preferring to leave its interests in their hands to act as they saw fit, and not risk a betrayal.

When the President of Surat heard of the death of Cromwell he and his Council were naturally filled with anxiety as to the political future of their country. They thought that anarchy would ensue, as "at the time of the military up-start emperors of Rome". At a Council held at Surat on the day following Christmas, 1659, the factors on shore and the commanders of the Company's ships resolved that the Company's vessels should proceed homeward together and not separate on the voyage. To render this the more binding the captains entered into an

[1] Rolt also, it would appear, entered the Company's service, for there can, I think, be little doubt it was he who became President of Surat in 1677.

obligation of £6,000 each. Moreover, if on arriving at St. Helena they were in receipt of no reassuring statement concerning the state of the Government and of the Company at home, they were not to venture on approaching English shores, but to steer for the island of Barbados. Here they were to remain until such tidings reached them as would guarantee the safety of the Company's property in England. Such was the touching confidence of trade in the English Republic!

At Madras the bullion which had been received from England had been coined into pagodas by the Company's mint. Part of these had been sent to Achin, Jambi and Macassar to purchase pepper and spices, while another portion went to Bengal to buy saltpetre, silks and muslins. These in turn, together with the spices, were ultimately destined by the factors of Madras for Surat, wherewith to reopen the trade with Persia. Taken altogether the Company's trade in India promised well in the season of 1659. But at the very moment when trade was resuming its old footing, the oppression of the Nawab led to a grave incident in Bengal. The Company's agent at Hugli resorted to the rash measure of seizing a country junk in the river Ganges as security for the recovery of certain debts. This proceeding was considered unjustifiable by Mir Jumlah, who threatened to retaliate on all the Company's settlements, including the seizure of that at Hugli. In alarm the agent reported the matter to Surat, and was directed to restore the junk. Should the concession be rejected, he was

ordered to call in all the out-agencies and have everything ready for a retreat from Bengal.

"Be on your guard," they told him, "against the Mogul officers. Suspect all the civilities. They usually offer them at the very moment when they intend to have recourse to violence and depredation." True Oriental wisdom that!

In England, at last, the people, sick of instability, welcomed joyfully the Restoration.

"The wave of loyalty," says Hunter, "which in 1660 swept across the nation touched high-water mark in the courts of the East India Company. It flooded out the Republican element from the committees, and left the 'generality' a royalist corporation. Its address of welcome to the restored monarch was accompanied by a present of plate worth £3,000, followed by one of £1,000 to his brother, the Duke of York. These compliments formed the precursors of a long series of loans to His Majesty, amounting to £170,000 during sixteen years, and of not less magnificent gifts, including an unsolicited vote of 10,000 guineas to the King, together with a like sum to his Royal Highness."[1]

Anticipating the event and fearful of being obliged to fulfil the late treaties, the Dutch Governor-General had basely issued secret orders to destroy all the spice trees in the island of Pularoon. Such an outrage aroused the deepest indignation in the Company. It also served it as an excuse to find out in which quarter lay the wind. A petition was

[1] *British India*, vol. ii., p. 182.

presented to Charles II. praying that His Majesty would remonstrate with the States-General, and that commissioners would be appointed to carry out the Company's rights to a proportion of the spice trade.

This was a boldness calculated to conceal the Company's misgivings. After having enjoyed the favour of the Protector could the adventurers be quite sure of that of his successor, Charles? Their anxiety was shared generally, and for the moment little money was forthcoming to carry on the business.

Happily the Company's fears were not realised. Charles bore it not the smallest resentment for having sought Cromwell's support; nor was he blind to the advantages which he might derive from the Company. Less than ten months, therefore, after he had come to the throne, he granted it a charter identical with that it had received from James I.

Not all the Commonwealth interlopers were to escape scot-free, and the case of one in particular, Thomas Skinner, made much stir in the nation. The culprit was a London merchant who went out to India in the very year of Cromwell's charter to the Company and settled in the island of Barella, which he purchased from the King of Jambi in Sumatra. The Company soon heard of his proceedings, swooped down upon him, confiscated his ship, his factory and his merchandise. Being denied a passage home, poor Skinner was obliged to make his way back to England overland, where he arrived soon after Charles's accession. Most lamentable complaints made he to the King and Parliament.

perhaps a fatal, blow. The Company even contrived to get from the King a warrant under the privy seal for its representative, enabling him to seize interlopers and carry them back to England. Moreover, as the culprits were not all outside the Company's own service, if any of its servants were caught indulging in illicit trade they were ordered to be instantly dismissed and sent home.

The rising importance of Madras made it advantageous to appoint an important official there also, independent of Surat. Accordingly, Sir Edward Winter was made Governor of Fort St. George, with jurisdiction over all the Bengal factories.

Everywhere the value of England's oversea trade was being admitted. The day of croaking insularity, of drab clothes and drab lives, was over and past. Silks and ornaments were once more in fashion. Pepper and spices again appeared at table.

"Behold then," cried Sir Thomas Mun (who had not dared to air his views during the Puritan ascendancy), "the true form and worth of foreign trade, which is the great revenue of the King, the honour of the Kingdom; the noble profession of the merchant; the school of our arts; the supply of our wants; the employment of our poor; the improvement of our lands; the nursery of our mariners; the walls of the Kingdom; the means of our treasure; the sinews of our wars; the terror of our enemies."[1] After this extravagant eulogium the belittlers of England's commerce were silenced. Even the

[1] *England's Treasure by Forraign Trade*, 1664.

penalty of additional Customs duties could be faced with equanimity.[1]

The Company was not to obtain its favours from Charles without something in return, and the wiser heads began to wonder what form the concessions would take. They were not left many months in doubt. The Duke of York, the King's brother, cast his eye on the African slave trade. It was quite essential to the prosperity of the West Indies, and especially Jamaica, that a sufficient stock of negro slaves should be imported. To take these from the West Coast of Africa involved trade, and trade involved an invasion of the African privileges of the Company which it had acquired by its union with the Assada merchants.[2] Charles, therefore, did not hesitate at his brother's instance to abrogate the Company's rights in Africa. He granted the Duke a charter for the formation of a new African Company, and transferred the East India Company's possessions to the new body. There was nothing for it, therefore, but to wind up affairs in Guinea, and to transfer the factors and goods (or their value) to the Indian agencies or to St. Helena, an island which the Company had for some time been contemplating as a half-way house to India.

[1] "Sir Martin Noel told us the dispute between him, as farmer of the Additional Duty, and the East India Company, whether callico be linen or no; which he says it is, having been ever esteemed so: they say it is made of cotton woole, and grows upon trees, not like flax or hemp. But it was carried against the Company, though they stand out against the verdict."—Pepys, 1663-4.

[2] It had also purchased in 1657 the charter rights and trade of the Guinea Company for a nominal £1,300.

Among the Company's African servants thus shipped off to Madras and Bantam by the winding up of the Guinea trade were a large number of negroes, who afterwards with their descendants played a useful part in the military defence of the Company's factories.

Of course, the transfer of Bombay was not to be made without misunderstandings and an unpleasant incident. On the 18th of September Lord Marlborough, accompanied by Gerald Aungier, arrived at Bombay and demanded its cession from the Portuguese Governor. This official evaded compliance with the demand, in which attitude he was unaccountably supported by the Viceroy, who was with Marlborough, and who refused to interpose his authority until he reached Goa and consulted the Indian Viceroy there. It appeared Marlborough interpreted the terms of the treaty of cession to signify Bombay and its suburbs or dependencies, *i.e.*, the islands of Tannah and Salsette. The Portuguese Governor, on the other hand, understood Bombay island alone. He even refused to allow a landing until this point was cleared up; until, indeed, the English general, who was delayed at Surat, should arrive. Meanwhile, Marlborough's troops were dying of scurvy and for want of food. In vain he pleaded for permission to land. Don Antonio de Mello de Castro stood firm in his obstinacy. Nor did he yield when Shipman arrived on the scene, alleging a want of formality in the letters patent carried by the Earl and his companions.

In this predicament application was made to

Oxenden to allow the troops to land at Surat. Oxenden, jealous of the Company's interests on the one hand, and fearful of giving offence to the Mogul on the other, refused. Shipman was in the end forced to land his little army on the island of Angedivah, twelve leagues from Goa. Marlborough finally set sail for home, leaving behind one of his fleet, the *Leopard* frigate.

On the return home of Marlborough, the Governor and Committee of the Company, wishing no doubt to propitiate his lordship for the conduct of its representatives, or else unaware of the true story of the business, waited on him to express their acknowledgments for the care he had taken of their shipping on the outward voyage, and for the support he had afforded to Sir George Oxenden, on assuming the administration of the Presidency of Surat, against the aggressions of the Dutch. All this display of gratitude was certainly very little deserved.

Charles, when he heard of the Bombay incident, was as nearly angry as he ever permitted himself to be. He ordered a memorial to be presented in July, 1663, to Don Francisco Rebello, the Portuguese Ambassador in London, demanding to be recouped for his vain outlay of nearly £100,000.[1] The

[1] "I did inform myself well in things relating to the East Indys: both of the country and the disappointment the King met with the last voyage, by the knavery of the Portugal Viceroy and the inconsiderableness of the place of Bombaim if we had had it. But above all things it seems strange to me that matters should not be understood before they went out; and also that such a thing as this, which was expected to be one of the best parts of the Queen's por-

Portuguese King and his ministers took it coolly. It was impossible, they said, to cede Salsette and Tannah because they had not been mentioned in the Treaty; but they were still willing to give up Bombay to the English. Not only thus was a good deal of altercation and unpleasantness rife in this quarter, but the relations of Dutch and English grew daily more embittered. In proportion as Dutch success increased, so also did Dutch insolence, at home and abroad.

At this juncture it seemed as if another foreign competitor might arise to oppress the Company's trade. Word came to hand that the French were fitting out eight armed vessels for the Indies. Of this project the moving spirit was one Hubert Hugo, a Dutch pirate. The Company, in alarm, deemed it best to order precautions to be taken, at sea especially, to avoid this intruding fleet. Moreover, it devised a warm commercial reception for the Franco-Dutchmen if they should reach Surat or Madras. Bullets and cannon balls might involve war with the Most Christian King, but there was nothing to prevent adoption of the Dutch custom of cutting down prices to a figure ruinous for fresh competitors. It could not be made certain, however, that the

tion, should not be better understood; it being, if we had it, but a poor place and not really so as was described to our King in the draught of it, but a poor little island, whereas they made the King and Lord Chancellor and other learned men about the King believe that that and other islands which were near it were all one piece and so the draught was drawn and presented to the King and believed by the King and expected to prove so when our men came thither; but it is quite otherwise."—Pepys' *Diary*, 8th September, 1663.

French adventurers would conduct their operations so pacifically; wherefore Sir Edward Winter, at Madras, was directed to put his fort in the best state of defence, and meantime to continue to work up the Hugli and Bantam trade. Pularoon, although ceded on paper, was not yet in possession of the English, and each attempt to retake it had been repulsed with force by the Dutch.

Meanwhile, the ill-fated general, Shipman, and his troops were marooned on the little island of Angidivah. To extricate them from a situation in which, from lack of proper food and water, they were dying off by the dozen, Shipman again made overtures to Oxenden. He proposed to cede the island of Bombay to the Company if the Viceroy at Goa could be brought to assent to such arrangement. Oxenden, in an excess of caution, declined; first, on the ground that the cession could only be made by the King; and, secondly, because he had not at his disposal a force sufficient to occupy or protect the island, in view of their precarious situation at Surat. This latter consideration appears in the light of after events somewhat absurd. With 400 desperate English soldiers as a garrison, it does not seem difficult to believe the Company could have held its own then, as afterwards, at Bombay.

Indeed, Oxenden had scarcely sent home his despatches this year describing the offer, and projecting new schemes of trade with the interior of the Peninsula, when the renowned Sivaji, an aspirant to the throne, and the founder of the Mahrattas, appeared with his army before Surat. The Gover-

nor shut himself up in his castle, the inhabitants took to their heels or fled in boats, and the Company's factory was placed in a state of siege. "The first spark of England's military glory in India," says Sir Monier Williams, "was kindled when the peace-loving, money-loving company of British traders nobly defended Surat in 1664 against the founder of the Mahratta power."

The property, valued at £80,000, was hid in the cellars, and the ships' crews called in to assist in the defence. Hard upon these martial measures Sivaji's attack was repulsed, and he retired, satisfied perforce with the plunder he had got elsewhere. This was not all. The Mogul, with true Eastern politeness and policy, could only construe Oxenden's defence as an act of fidelity to himself. He therefore warmly tendered his gratitude, and as a reward for his fidelity, extended the privileges of trade at Surat and exempted them for one year from the payment of Customs. It is not unlikely that Oxenden's defence preserved Surat from destruction, but Sivaji may have been restrained, too, by wholesome fear of his uncle's vengeance and his imminent armies. Oxenden was certainly not the man to forego the advantage he had valiantly gained. On the next tidings of approach of Sivaji, he notified the Mogul's uncle at Broach, at the same time soliciting the further confirmation of the Company's privileges, in view of the spirited defence of their property they were about to make—for the Mogul. The expected attack did not come off, but Oxenden got his reward.

The folly of trying to maintain the Persian trade without ships or soldiers was becoming more sadly apparent. "The English character," wrote Oxenden, "has sunk in the estimation of the Persians." He found small comfort in the expedient of sending to the Gulf stations small native craft for the port to port trade. The Dutch were on the watch, and as often as not captured them.

In 1663 the Nawab of Bengal died, and this event left Governor Winter at Madras somewhat anxious as to the future. The ships from England and Africa had arrived with goods, bullion (£92,300 worth) and slaves. This stock would have been sufficient to put the Coromandel trade on a firm basis; but the Nawab's death disturbed all the markets and rendered everything uncertain. Wherefore Winter was led to consider the project of establishing a trade with Siam.

While this was being resolved in the East, at home a Dutch war loomed up on the horizon. When word of it should reach the Indies the English factors might expect instant hostilities. Captures in the European seas soon commenced, the English fleet had sailed to meet the Dutch fleet, but a declaration of war had not yet been issued. Measures were taken accordingly in 1664-65 at all the Company's Indian factories. The sloop *Chesnut* was sent to rescue Sir Abraham Shipman and his marooned soldiers on the island of Angedivah. It was ordered that these should add to the strength of the Madras garrison, where a Dutch attack was expected. This state of affairs

explains why during the season the Company sent out two ships only with £16,000 worth of merchandise.

When the *Chesnut* arrived at Angedivah, a melancholy spectacle met the eye. Shipman was dead and the island was strewn with corpses—victims of disease and lack of nourishment. Only a single Englishman was left to explain the whereabouts of the survivors. It appeared that to prevent any further miseries the officer in charge had arranged with the Viceroy of Goa in November, 1664, to occupy Bombay island only, with the additional article to the treaty as interpreted by the Portuguese Governor, that all of his native residents in Bombay should be freed from payment of Customs and have a certain liberty of trade.

Thus was the marriage present of the Dowager-ridden Portuguese Court to King Charles narrowed down to the smallest and most ungracious proportions. Out of four hundred troops and their officers that had embarked from England in March, 1662, less than a scurvy-stricken hundred landed in Bombay in February, 1665.[1]

It will be recalled that for a long period the utmost pressure had been brought to bear upon the Dutch to induce them to restore the island of Pularoon, which they had in a high-handed manner filched from the English. Not until the 25th

[1] These survivors formed the nucleus of the Company's 1st European Regiment or Bombay Fusiliers, subsequently the 103rd Foot. The other regiment raised at the same time became known as "Kirke's Lambs," afterwards the 2nd or Queen's Regiment.—Birdwood.

March, 1665, did the cession take place. The Company's agent landed: he beheld a scene of utter desolation. The whole of the spice trees had been destroyed, and at least eight years would be required to render the island of any value. Thus Pularoon, which had been the theme of so much discussion, of numerous negotiations and treaties in Europe, of so many subterfuges and evasions at Batavia, was for the present as useless as Angedivah.

To offset the Company's disappointment, Quarles Browne, the Bantam agent, cast about for a new island wherein promise of profit was to be found. He found it at Damm, the chief of which place entered into a treaty with the English,[1] who were to fortify it against the Dutch. But this plan also was foiled; within two months a trio of Dutch ships arrived, and pretending a prior treaty, which the unhappy chiefs disavowed, expelled the Company's servants and took possession of Damm. Thus was killed all hope of English profit in the Spice Islands for that season.

At one of the meetings of the Company in 1664 it was resolved to make fresh attempts at a commerce with China and Japan. Browne of Bantam was the only man in the Company's service who had been in either kingdom, and he was accordingly appealed to for advice. It might have been fancied that this zealous agent had already enough on his hands. He was in delicate health, his days were rendered wretched by constant bickerings with the

[1] They were to deliver to the King of England a nutmeg tree with the earth adhering to it, as a pledge of their homage.

Dutch Governor and by the incessant disappointments which attended his plans. Nevertheless he flung himself into the project for a reopening of the Anglo-Japanese trade. He made fresh inquiries and elaborated a report by which he showed how this trade was to be obtained. "Establish," said he, "agencies at Siam, Gambodia and Tonquin to collect the produce which is in demand in the Japanese market, and at which it would be received from the subsisting relations between the chiefs in those countries and the Japan Government." This was the plan adopted by the Dutch. It necessitated considerable capital and the employment of native middlemen who would "form contracts with the inhabitants for bringing in at fixed seasons buffalo and deer hides, of which these kingdoms furnished immense quantities at the annual inundations, when those animals descended from the mountains to the banks of the rivers". With those staples, which, by the way, we hardly associate with Siam and Cambodia of to-day, Browne proposed to open a flourishing trade at Tokio and Firando, getting in exchange therefor Japanese goods, principally silver. Upon a silver foundation he would build the declining Spice Islands trade to proportions it had never yet enjoyed. But he especially enjoined upon the Company to send out men—"persons properly qualified to judge of the value of Japanese goods, particularly silver, otherwise the Japanese would impose baser metals on strangers, whom they would soon discover to be no judges of their intrinsic value".

In his plans, Browne of Bantam forgot nothing.

He first perceived a future for "tee" if it could once be made fashionable in Europe.[1] In his mind's eye, as he lay on his bed wasting with disease, he saw a mighty Anglo-Japanese commerce uprisen: he pictured his Dutch rivals, who had so long baffled him, superseded in the Mikado's realm: but above all, he looked across the seas for the approval of his masters. Nor was he mistaken in the reception his project met with: the Company approved of it unanimously. Yet, at the very moment its secretary penned a letter of commendation poor Quarles Browne lay dead, active in his masters' affairs to the last. Names there are of few more zealous and active men in the Company's annals than poor Browne of Bantam. And thus we read that "the project of the Japan trade was necessarily retarded by the loss of this able and highly informed servant".

Apart from the abortive attempt of 1673, it was postponed for nearly two centuries. As for tea, it grew gradually in European favour, but not till 1715 was a regular Anglo-Chinese trade established at Canton.

[1] "I did send for a cup of *tee* (a China drink), of which I had never drank before."—Pepys, 25th September, 1660. The Company in 1664 purchased and presented 2 lb. of tea to the King, and 23¾ lb. in 1666. Its first received consignment was from Bantam three years later.—Birdwood.

CHAPTER XI.

Bombay has a New Master.

THE English and Dutch, who had been fighting each other for half a century in the East, were again at war in Europe. One of the first to fall, in the naval battle of Lowestoft, was that Earl of Marlborough whom we have lately seen taking possession for King Charles of the island of Bombay, so much coveted by the Dutch themselves. This war was just the opportunity for which the active commercial spirits in the neighbouring kingdom had long waited. The projectors in Paris of an East India trade now flung off all reserve, and by the establishment of a French company for the second time boldly entered the wider commercial arena.

A year or two before, the merchants in Leadenhall Street had been rendered most uneasy, not to say alarmed, when they learned that eight French fighting ships were being equipped at Dieppe for the East: now they found themselves face to face with a French rival their backs stiffened for a conflict which they felt to be inevitable.

In the meantime, the awkward business of Bombay had to be settled by the King. The whole of Cooke's proceedings were disavowed; the convention which he had made with the Portuguese was annulled, and Sir Gervase Lucas, an old Royalist

who had distinguished himself in the Civil Wars, was despatched as Governor. The Company's interests were not forgotten. Charles assured Sir William Thomson, the Company's Governor, that full protection would be afforded to its factories and trade, and gave Lucas instructions to that effect.

The Company's ship that carried out Sir Gervase also bore letters of advice to Oxenden at Surat, to the Governor of Fort St. George, Madras, and to the Council at Bantam, giving them a concise account of the European military and commercial situation, and bidding them each and all be henceforward equally on their guard against French as well as Dutch. For by this time France had broken out into actual war with England, although, through the secret dispositions of their respective monarchs, in but half-hearted fashion. The Company was particularly anxious about Bantam, the weakest of all its settlements. It apprehended that, if they could, its enemies would seize its property there, after having first taken and despoiled the Company's ships. As a means of foiling this, it wrote to its agents, first to cultivate by every practical means the friendship of the King of Bantam, and then to put their trust in God and all their capital into pepper. If no ship were in port and none should arrive from the other settlements, they were not to despair and sit down with hands folded : the Council was ordered to lay hold of a couple of native craft, and, if proper officers and crew could be found to navigate them, pack them with pepper and sail straight to England.

"Do not, however, touch at St. Helena," it charged them, "for there the French and Dutch doubtless lurk; but make for the first port in England or Ireland, and there await our further orders."

The emotions of the Bantam Council on reading this letter may be imagined, when one remembers that a junk voyage was most precarious even between Bantam and the mainland, and that a trip to Japan was held dangerous save in a calm. Suppressing their full opinion of a proposal which evinced the Company's ignorance of conditions, the Council replied by setting forth anew the views of their late President. Bantam had not been treated fairly; either the trade must be entered upon with spirit and an adequate capital supplied, or it had better be abandoned. This remonstrance had weight with the Company, and it set about, as we shall see, to reclaim the Bantam trade from the depths into which it had fallen. But in vain. We may note, in passing, that not even could it look forward in future to Pularoon, for, hearing of the outbreak of war, the Dutch again seized that island, which, together with Damm, remains amongst their East Indian possessions to this day.

The new and spiritless war with Holland scarce increased the risks and burdens which the Company's servants had borne for fifty years. "England again fighting the Dutchmen," exclaimed one of the factors; "why, we in the Indies have been fighting them with tongue and fist, sword and pistol, ever since my grandfather was a Company's ship 'prentice."

Yet it was certain that open hostilities exposed

the Company's shipping to greater risks of capture, both on the high seas and in the port to port trade. Once, just as the homeward-bound fleet was about to put out from Surat, four large Dutch ships came upon the scene. They did not dare attack the Englishmen in a Mogul port, and, on the other hand, did not choose to depart, and so they lingered, eyeing each other grimly for weeks, before the Hollanders slunk away. Then, elsewhere, on the Malabar coast particularly, there were high-handed proceedings against the native merchants, friends of the English traders, and underhanded seizure of English property, until the Company's men were forced to retire from these parts in disgust. But for their recourse to the native merchants in moments of stress they would have been manywhere subjected to ruin.

Nor were these troubles all that Oxenden and his council at Surat had to meet. The Portuguese were doing all they could to make trouble over the wretched island of Bombay, which had been ceded to the King of England. Entrenched in the surrounding islands and at Salsette,[1] which, notwithstanding the terms of the royal cession, they refused to surrender, they levied fines and imposts on the English boats, and otherwise bullied and harassed the English soldiers. But all this concerned Oxenden less than that the Mogul and his ministers were

[1] As it turned out, Salsette, with its fort or *thana*, remained in Portuguese hands until its capture by the Mahrattas in 1739. In 1774 the English took it from the Mahrattas, and it was duly turned over to the Company by treaty in 1782.

jealous of the English possessing an island and garrisoning it so near to Surat, their most important seaport. They began to murmur antagonism to the English. All Cooke's acts as King's Governor of Bombay were charged upon Oxenden, the Company's President at Surat. The native authorities could not comprehend how there could be "two distinct bodies belonging to the same nation, the officers and servants of the King, and of a Company of merchants who had hitherto professed trade to be their object, but who were now affording provisions and aid to a garrison with which they pretended not to have a common interest".[1] For, all this time, Oxenden had been obliged practically to support the Bombay establishment by money and provisions under orders from the Company, until the King's pleasure concerning it should be known. It was clearly, therefore, good policy, in Oxenden's opinion, for the Company itself to establish a factory at Bombay. If it did not, others would. Cooke, all unconscious of his impending fall, was already inviting native merchants to settle there, at the same time that his arrogance was seriously jeopardising the Company's interests with the Bombayans.

In a miserable dispute about a junk which Cooke imprudently seized, we see the English in India appearing for the first time to the native powers in the two distinct characters of King's and Company's servants. Both were English, both acknowledged one monarch; and yet both had distinct and

[1] Bruce's *Annals*, vol. ii.

separate powers. No wonder the Mogul and his lieges were puzzled!

Nor was this the only division of interests and authority of members of the same nation. It occasionally happened that the commercial interests of the Company were obscured in the private interests of the factor. Charges of private trading were repeatedly made against some of the leading factors in the service. They had led to the recall or impeachment of many since Captain Best's time, and Oxenden himself was not spared. The temptations were certainly strong had the charge been true, but in this instance Oxenden repudiated it with indignation, and, although affairs on the West Coast were in a perilous state, sent in his resignation.

Ere he had despatched his letter, Sir Gervase Lucas landed at Bombay, 5th November, 1666. He proceeded to inquire vigorously into Cooke's administration; but, as a King's officer, thought it not at all requisite to open any correspondence with Sir George Oxenden, or to notify him in any way of his proceedings. At this Oxenden took umbrage. Learning that Cooke contrived for some time to be at Bombay, and ignorant of his forcible detention by Sir Gervase, he jumped to the conclusion that an understanding existed between them to his detriment. A decided coolness therefore sprang up between the Company's man at Surat and the King's officer at Bombay. Lucas, suspicious of Oxenden, would not even despatch his letters to England by way of Surat, but chose instead the roundabout Persian route.

Sir Edward Winter had been appointed in 1662 to the rising settlement of Madras, with powers of a similar character, though less in extent, to those conferred upon Oxenden. Winter was an ardent Royalist, having his own views of the Indian trade, and by no means disposed to accept uninformed advice, or tamely subordinate himself to others, whether at home or in India. From the moment of his arrival he flung himself with zeal into the work of retrieving the position of Fort St. George, possibly not without a hope of its eventually becoming the property of the Crown. The death of the Nawab and the uncertainty respecting his successor threatened to nullify Winter's efforts. Added to this, the Dutch, even then expecting war with England, renewed their obstructive measures in the vicinity of his agency. Winter, however, was not daunted, he resolved to take one enemy at a time; if he could show a bold front to the native aggressors of the Company, instead of following the weak-kneed, pacific policy which the Company in its old timorous mood had urged, he would crumble opposition in that quarter, and be all the readier to encounter the overbearing Hollanders. Winter was certainly right—time was to prove it—but to the Company at home his propositions for retaliation by sword and shell on the native marine marauders seemed violent and revolutionary. Imperiously it ordered him home, and appointed one George Foxcroft to succeed him. This was in the spring of 1665.

If Leadenhall Street expected its zealous agent tamely to comply with its instructions, it had utterly

mistaken Winter's character. He first reiterated his theories and warned the Company of the folly of not seconding them. "Look at the Dutch," said he, "their large stock of naval power would never have given them the trade which they now enjoy had they not kept in awe the native powers." Once, when he had protested to one of the coast chiefs against the depredations committed by his followers on the goods destined for Madras, and the arbitrary duties imposed upon them, he was told that "when the English horns and teeth grew, he would then free them from the duty". Winter refrained from making any verbal protest against his supersession, but he continued to harbour the secret conviction that he was the best man for the post. Concealing his chagrin, therefore, on Foxcroft's arrival in June, 1665, Winter received his intended successor and suite with decorum. But three months later, on the eve of Winter's announced departure, Foxcroft, his son, and Jeremy Sambrooke, his crony, were attacked, wounded and flung into gaol; another, named Dawes, was slain. The accusation against them was that they had uttered seditious and treasonable expressions against the King's government. Sir Edward Winter, by this *coup d'état*, assisted by several of his friends, reassumed the government of Fort St. George. To vindicate his conduct at home he explained by letter to the Company that he could bring proofs of the offences charged on the affidavits of the chaplain and others whose ears had been assailed by the "seditious and traitorous" expressions. Being now in a mood for letter-writing, and

anxious to draw all the prestige he could from the episode as pictured by himself, the Governor composed several epistles, couched in magniloquent phrases, and professing his loyalty to Crown and religion as the sole motive of his conduct. Two of these he actually addressed to the King and the Archbishop of Canterbury, taking care not to entrust them to the Company's ships for fear of their being confiscated, or to allow them to pass through the Company's hands in England.

Foxcroft, in this predicament, loudly complained, through the agency of a friend, to Sir George Oxenden of the outrage. The President of Surat remonstrated in vain. Winter, confident of the security of his position, pursued his course with calm diligence and sobriety; resolved not to be ousted, he exerted himself to the utmost to secure and promote trade, while constantly ignoring the suggestions and instructions of the Company addressed to his official successor and his actual prisoner. He refused to withdraw any of the out-agencies—"a most impolitic measure"—and told his masters plainly that if Madras, Bengal and Golconda were to pay he must be provided with more ships and money. Season after season passed and Winter held his post, rumours were dispersed that he intended to go over to the Dutch: it was even said a Dutch fleet had arrived off Madras for the purpose of the transfer. The Company, which had hoped from the first that its refractory Governor would reconsider the position, now became alarmed. He and his adherents were promised pardon and reward. The Governor, in his

letters home, adopted a tone of respectful suavity. He expressed no consciousness of wrongdoing, and gave his superiors to understand that all his actions were regulated by consideration for his ungrateful Company's welfare. There was humour in the situation.

While these squabbles and jealousies were in progress, the native powers were still plunged into war. Aurangzeb was receiving Sivaji's onslaught; he was, moreover, threatened with invasion by the Shah of Persia. In this predicament the Mogul demanded assistance from Oxenden in the shape of English engineers and artillerymen for the siege he had in contemplation. The Company's President could hardly comply with this request; he could not borrow soldiers from Bombay, considering the strained relations which existed between himself and Lucas. Aurangzeb, therefore, withdrew his treasure from Surat, and left the protection of the place to the Company. Thus this station, together with that at Carwar and Calicut, and indeed all trade in this part of the East, were in jeopardy from any European or native foe.

At Madras, Winter continued to hold the fort, despite all threats, while Foxcroft languished in confinement. It was again and again reported in Leadenhall Street that Winter contemplated surrendering Fort St. George to the Dutch, then entrenched in Ceylon, and that he would after this act of treachery take service with the Company's enemies. We shall see later if these rumours were true.

In the meantime no wonder that with such critical proceedings in their Eastern settlements the feelings of the merchant adventurers as they sat about the "greate oake table" in the City, or driven thence by the plague and conflagration to the drawing-rooms of their fellow-members in the country, were harrowed. While it can hardly be said that they escaped quite scatheless from the terrible calamities of 1665 and 1666, yet certain it is they suffered far less severely than many of their ruined neighbours. By the Great Fire the Company lost all that share of saltpetre which its agents abroad had accumulated, as well as all the pepper stored in the vaults of the Royal Exchange. Yet it might have been far worse, and so truly they might exclaim that "God was pleased to be very favourable to the Company's interests".

About this time the Company was having fresh cause of complaint in the attitude towards them of King Charles's ministers. The Dutch war was drawing to a close; the Treaty of Breda was projected between the two nations, and the Governor and Deputy-Governor of the Company attended the conference at the King's invitation. On the whole, the terms (on the principle of *Uti possidetis*) were favourable to Charles, but the Company was called upon to give up the islands of Pularoon and Damm.

"What!" cried the Court, not yet apprised of the base outrage committed upon it by the Dutch. "Give up Pularoon, which we first settled, and have held at so much cost!"

Such hot remonstrance, though unavailing if the treaty was to be observed, reached the King's ears. He had no wish to make the Company suffer unduly. At that moment there came into his hands Sir Gervase Lucas's report concerning Bombay. He already more than suspected that this portion of Queen Catherine's dowry was not all that it had been extolled. Pepys, we know, had written in his diary that the King had been well "choused by the Portugalls". Charles, in brief, made up his mind to get rid of a possession which threatened to be a ruinous source of expense. The Company, he knew, coveted it; it should have it. He quietly intimated the gift, and the Governor straightway waited on the King at Whitehall to express the Company's exceeding pleasure. A royal charter was prepared, under whose provisions the island was transferred from Charles to the Company, "henceforward to be holden in free and common soccage as of the manor of East Greenwich on payment of the annual rent of £10 in gold, on the 30th September in each year". At the same time were conveyed to the Company all the stores, arms and ammunition which were upon the island, together with such political powers as were necessary for its defence and government.

A copy of this charter granting the island of Bombay to the Company was forwarded to Sir Gervase Lucas, together with a letter empowering him to deliver the island to Sir George Oxenden and the Council of Surat. By the same ship, the *Constantinople*, the merchant adventurers despatched

a commission to Oxenden to receive the island and to vest one of his Council with the civil and military administration of it. An estimate of the revenues of Bombay, amounting to £2,833 per annum, was also enclosed, while Oxenden received instructions to engage any of the King's troops who might be disposed to enter the Company's service, while those who preferred civil life were to be granted half-pay on condition of their becoming settlers on the island. In brief, the Company, in spite of the prevailing pessimism in Court circles, already saw with prophetic eye a future greatness for its newly acquired station of Bombay. It resolved to centre much attention and capital upon it. Troops were to be brought from Bantam and Madras to garrison it. Determined to obtain by commercial competition with the Dutch an equality of trade in Western India, the merchant adventurers adopted this season (1668) a more extensive plan of commerce than they had done since the restoration of their charter. Six ships, carrying £130,000 worth of merchandise, were sent to Oxenden, and if this were insufficient, he was empowered to borrow as much more money as he chose. Besides this fleet, a smaller ship was sent to Bantam, *viâ* Surat.

Any misgivings which the Company may have felt as to the effects of the unhappy rivalry between Oxenden and Lucas, as well as of the disposition towards their interests of the former, it strove studiously to conceal. Oxenden, it will be remembered, had asked to come home to answer a charge of private trading. The Company pooh-poohed

his request; it ignored the charges made by his enemies, and besought him to remain in the administration of its affairs for at least three years longer. Nor did its magnanimity end here. It conferred upon Oxenden £200 and a gold medal[1] in recognition of his services at the time of Sivaji's onslaught, together with £400 to be distributed among his fellows. By these means it trusted that Oxenden's zeal would be secured, and that he would not be led at this critical juncture to follow the example of Sir Edward Winter at Madras, who was now confidently believed to have betrayed the Company's interests to the Dutch.

Oxenden needed no stimulus to his loyalty, and as for the animosity between him and Sir Gervase Lucas, death had removed it. When the captain of the *Constantinople* touched at Surat, in September, 1668, he learnt that Sir Gervase had expired the preceding spring, being succeeded at Bombay by one Captain Gary, believed to be a strong royal partisan. The business which confronted Oxenden was one of such delicacy that he resolved not to go himself to Bombay, but to send one of his Council, Goodyer, who was on familiar terms with Gary. Goodyer acquitted himself of his mission with tact. Duly forming his small garrison into line, Gary read them the charter, and formally made over the island of Bombay, its live and dead stock and cash, amounting to £4,879 7s. 6d., to the Company's agent. Yet, although he obeyed this royal com-

[1] With the inscription: *Non minor est virtus quam quaerere parta tueri; i.e.*, the Preserver is not less than the Conqueror.

mand to the letter, Gary confessed in a letter to the Secretary of State that "the unexpected change had much troubled him," and that he had performed his task with a heavy heart. The garrison were not quite so dutiful, but their resistance faded away under threats of instant disbandment. Gary was made a member of Council, and was subsequently judge of the island. Captain Young was appointed by Oxenden to the post of Deputy-Governor, but he was soon afterwards guilty of gross misconduct and was dismissed.

As for Cooke, that political failure and embezzler who had preceded both Lucas and Gary in the royal Governorship, he fled to Goa, and placed himself under the protection of the Jesuits. On hearing of Lucas's death, he wrote to Gary claiming the succession. This claim being rejected, Cooke thereupon returned to the vicinity, established himself at Salsette, and threatened to join the Portuguese in attacking Bombay. But his threats were treated with contempt, and he was openly branded as a traitor. And that is the last we hear of Master Humphrey Cooke.

Meanwhile, the irrepressible Winter continued to hold the fort at Madras. In vain had the Company turned from threats to pleadings: Winter refused to be dislodged. He was equally unamenable to royal authority. As he had treated the Company's orders, so he treated those of the King. They were forgeries, he said, intended to betray him into a dereliction of duty. It was true, as the Company complained, there was no trade, because his enemies

had blockaded the port; but he and his Council would stand firm, and the "saucy merchant," Foxcroft, who had been nominated his successor, should continue to taste the sweets of confinement. As for his being a traitor, Sir Edward averred that he would resist every attempt which the Dutch might make on the garrison to the last drop of his blood, till His Majesty should be pleased to command him over an indubitable sign-manual, or the Court of Directors might instruct him in script free from the reproach of suspicion.

For a number of years the Company had abandoned the Persian trade. Its only relation with that kingdom was through a solitary factor who lingered on at Gombroon to keep up the Company's claim to half the Customs at that port. But in 1668, while enlarging its general field of operations, the merchant adventurers in London resolved to return to Persia. Edward Rolt, now one of the leading factors at Surat, was appointed agent in Persia. At the same time Oxenden and his Council were directed to make an estimate of the number and kind of armed vessels which would be required in the Persian Gulf to protect trade and enforce the payment of the Customs at Gombroon. The Company began to rely more and more on Oxenden; he was this same season officially designated Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Bombay, although he continued to reside at Surat, and he may be said practically to have dominated English interests in this part of the East. A brave and able servant, Oxenden is now rightly honoured as one of the founders of British rule in India.

On the 5th January, 1669, Governor Oxenden arrived in person from Surat to set on foot a system for the civil and military government of Bombay. This system was almost wholly devised by him, and the regulations he drew up are worthy of remark, considered in the light of other events. These prescribed the duties required of all the servants and soldiers. Neglect or breach of duty in the inferior officers and in the soldiers was made a capital offence; in the superior officers it was punished merely with deprivation of rank. This was the genesis of the Company as a military power. Henceforward all its military establishments were modelled upon Bombay, and until the King's troops were sent to India and the question arose how far the Company's troops were competent to hold courts-martial or exercise martial law, Oxenden's regulations were in general adoption.

But India was by no means at this time the sole aim of the Company's operations. Besides increasing the equipment to Persia, it now again began to cast its gaze towards China and the remoter parts of the East.

In 1669 it ordered a factor to repair with a small stock to Cambodia with a view to trade with Manila and China. Nor was this all: it sought and obtained a footing in the far South. The Dutch having abandoned St. Helena in 1651 for the Cape of Good Hope, of which one of the Company's captains had taken possession as far back as 1620, the Company had in turn laid hold of the island. Charles II. confirmed its right by a charter issued on the 3rd of

April, 1661, under which he empowered the Company "to erect castles, fortifications and forts in the island of St. Helena, and to furnish them with stores and ammunition, to engage such number of men as they should think fit to serve as a garrison". The Dutch, jealous of the English occupying such an advantageous station for the Indian trade, four years later retook the island, but they were quickly expelled and thenceforward St. Helena became an English colony and port of call. In 1669 Captain Stringer was appointed the first Resident Governor, and plans were laid for making the island populous and profitable. To this end the several captains of the Company's fleet of twenty-two ships were when at St. Helena directed to act as members of the St. Helena Council, and settlers were sent out from England.

At this time, letters coming thick and fast at Whitehall from the egregious Sir Edward Winter, a faction at home began to credit that he was a much-abused man, that the Company had made a mistake in sacrificing him to his enemies. Of these latter was Jearsey, Company's agent at Masulipatam, whose representations, added to those of the imprisoned Foxcroft, finally induced his masters at home to take stern measures to bring Winter to reason. Two vessels with a commissioner bearing orders from both the Company and the King arrived in Madras Roads. A couple of Winter's friends coming on board, were made prisoners, but procured their release by surrendering the fort. Foxcroft, after two years' confinement, was then placed in possession. Among his first acts was to discharge

several of Winter's partisans, ordering others home to England, including Smythes, a chaplain and the Governor's close counsellor. Winter himself, declining to leave Madras, was compelled to reside outside the fort, whereupon he retired to Masulipatam, in the firm expectation that the King and his friends in England would effect his rehabilitation.

Nor was he entirely disappointed. Smythes and another, on their arrival in London, argued his case so effectually, both in Leadenhall Street and at Whitehall, that the Company reconsidered the whole case which had so long occasioned pecuniary loss and anxiety.[1] By special order from the Privy Council Winter was permitted to remain for a time in Madras; Foxcroft was superseded by Sir William Langhorne, and he and his son, together with Jearsey, the agent at Masulipatam, were ordered to return home. Not until the spring of 1672 did Winter embark for England. Here his dispute with the Company recommenced, and two years later Lord Shaftesbury, as arbitrator, awarded him £6,000. Winter afterwards settled down at York House, Battersea, clearly in affluent circumstances. He died

[1] The inconveniences attending letter-writing on the part of individual servants led the Company shortly afterwards to regulate the whole practice of correspondence. Its Presidencies and agents were ordered in future to "treat separately of their commercial or other interests and in like manner of those of each factory or station, but not (as had been the practice) to blend the whole of these subjects together in one general description". Moreover, "*General Letters* only would be received as authentic information from their principal settlements, and prohibited individuals, in future, to write to the Court, which tended only to excite jealousies and disputes among their servants".—*Court Letter-book*, 22nd Feb., 1670-71.

in 1686, and was buried in the parish church, where a monument to his memory, surmounted by a portrait bust, may to this day be seen.

Men of Sir George Oxenden's metal were not common in the East, and it was therefore with peculiar regret that the Company learnt of his death in July, 1669. It is not improbable that Oxenden had at one period indulged in private trade, nor is it unlikely that in a similar situation he might have acted as Winter had done at Madras; but of his general ability and valour there was no question. Next to him, at the time of his death, stood one of the Council, Gerald Aungier, who was chosen to succeed him. Aungier signalised his accession to office by increased efforts to obtain trade and generally increase the operations of the Company. He sent agents, ships and money in all directions. When the Mogul banished the shroffs and banians (or native merchants) from Surat and so caused an embarrassing tightness in the local money market, Aungier instantly suggested removing the Presidency to Bombay. In the meanwhile he encouraged the idea of allowing certain Persian banians and traders to settle at the latter port, "which might lead to a solid connection with Persia".

Young's conduct as Deputy-Governor at Bombay, and his quarrels with his Council, finally demanded interference. Aungier, therefore, proceeded to Bombay, settled the dispute by expelling Young, formed two Courts of Judicature, further regulated the general government and appointed Matthew Gray, late agent at Achin, to be Young's successor.

Returning to Surat he averted a threatened descent by Sivaji, and flung himself zealously into projects for increasing the country trade.

The Company in London watched all this zeal with approval: and thereby felt amply repaid for the occasional ill-conduct of its other servants. Shortly before this it had contemplated a project of building ships in India for its general commerce. An order had actually been sent to Oxenden to build two vessels at Bombay, mainly for the defence and trade of that island, but also to be employed to bring cargoes to Europe. But with this scheme the Act of Navigation seriously interfered. None but British-built ships could be used in the import of Asiatic produce into England, and as Charles resolved to carry out Oliver's policy, the Company had only to conform to a law which was found to be so advantageous at home.

About this time a mint was established in Bombay for coining both gold and silver and, subsequently, small copper money. But the impression on such coins could not "bear any resemblance to the King's Coin, and be such only as would render them current at the places where the Company traded; and particularly that they should be of such purity as would make them pass among the natives as precious metals only, which would not only facilitate their reception but add to the credit and character of the Company". Letters patent for this purpose were obtained from King Charles, and soon the East India Company's rupees, xeraphins, shahis and pagodas were being scattered through the bazaars and marts

of the East and from their unwonted honesty and purity met with a hearty native reception. It is said that the fact that they were stamped with Persian characters gave some offence to the Mogul.[1]

The Company charged Aungier to see that trial by jury was introduced into the Courts of Bombay, agreeably to English law. It shrank from "engaging a judge, versed in the civil law," being mortally afraid that such a personage might be disposed to promote litigation and not improbably deride the orders which the President and Council might find it for the interest of the Company to give him. The Company therefore decided to send out as civil servants some persons who had received education in the law, without making the practice of the law their only object, and if they deserved well, they might be appealed to as assistants in the Courts of Justice.[2]

Truly timid was the Company about giving umbrage in those days: careful about any act or policy whence violence, even though justifiable, or expense might be the outcome. We have seen it in 1662 recalling Sir Edward Winter in affright when he suggested reprisals and the proper fortification of Madras, the growth of those "horns and teeth" the natives alone could be made to fear. It now rejected

[1] In 1697 the Company settled the value of many coins at Surat and Bombay as follows: the rupee at two shillings and sixpence; the xeraphin at twenty pence at Bombay; the Persian shahi at four shillings at Carwar; and the pagoda at nine shillings at Calicut. About this time the Persian characters were dropped from the Company's coinage to placate the Mogul authorities.

[2] *Court Letter-book*, 22nd February, 1671.

his successor's project of compelling the native chiefs to make restitution for injuries on shore by retaliation at sea. It was, in its opinion, "chimerical, if not hazardous"; it was sure "the expense of armed vessels would exceed any influence which might arise from adopting a scheme which would render ineffectual the grants which had hitherto been obtained by bribes or mercantile submission". "Bribes and mercantile submission" is an ill policy: the policy of "trust the man on the spot" had not yet obtained favour.

The Company, indeed, until James II.'s reign presents the spectacle of a huntsman with his beagles in leash passing through a strange wood, where there is everything to tempt their instincts and where, once liberated, they might easily make themselves masters for their master. If only Sir Josiah Child could have had his way and his brother, Sir John, had lived!

All this restraint and niggardliness was bound to precipitate resentment and mutiny. They were not all pacific souls, even in the civil establishment in the East. One of its servants shrewdly wrote that the Company's government with its eye constantly on immediate profits "quadrates not with a British militia".

At Bombay, it had permitted Aungier to fortify the place, but it had refused to send him skilled officers, inasmuch as "we know that it is natural to engineers to contrive curiosities that are very expensive". So Aungier was forced to do the best he could, completing the line of Martello towers begun by Oxenden, and equipping the main fortress with

heavy ordnance and sixty light field-pieces. While he laboured, Sivaji again descended on Surat. Some days before, Bahadur Khan entered the city with 3,000 horse, to defend it against the Mahratta usurper. It was necessary by large gifts to conciliate his favour; the Dutch and French factories had done it; the Mogul chief commonly estimated the importance of distant nations by the size of such gifts. Consequently, Oxenden's nephew, Streynsham Master, whom Aungier had left in charge, did not hesitate; he took a wise course, defying the Company's parsimony: his propitiatory offering was larger than any.

Sivaji, with 15,000 men, came and pillaged the city. Several lives and some property were lost in detached warehouses belonging to the Company, but the factory was as gallantly defended as in 1664. Sivaji finally retired with a vast quantity of booty, but with little, thanks to Streynsham Master's courage and activity, belonging to the Company. For this the latter was duly grateful and sent Master a formal vote of thanks and a gold medal resembling that it had sent his uncle a few years before.

The years which in India saw Gerald Aungier toiling with his engineers "which had been reluctantly sent from home" and his artisans, in the task of creating out of swamp and rock and sand the nucleus of modern Bombay,[1] were in Europe the

[1] A young private adventurer, Herman Bake, who had gone to Persia overland to try his luck, and failed, gave valuable assistance to Aungier. Bake had been trained as an engineer, and had served as a captain in the Low Countries. At first he was given for his labour nothing but his subsistence; but he ultimately became appointed engineer and surveyor-general of Bombay.

years of a new Dutch war. While the war threatened, the Company had been revolving a plan to extend their trade by trying exchanges between India and the countries bordering on the China sea. With this view it had taken up sixteen hundred tons of shipping, exclusive of two vessels intended primarily for Bantam, to make the experiment of trade with Tonquin, Formosa and Japan. But when hostilities grew almost certain, it felt that such a course was exposed to too many hazards from the Dutch.

The fleet of four ships going out to Surat were ordered not to touch at the Cape of Good Hope, and to be on their guard when approaching St. Helena, lest they be captured. On the whole, the Coromandel Coast trade appeared most promising to the Company at this juncture; for here the Dutch were weakest. It therefore sent out a number of ships to Madras, £160,000 of stock, chiefly gold and bullion, and ordered the garrison at Fort St. George to be strengthened. A fresh war with Holland broke out; the Company anticipated that its Eastern ships and establishments would be exposed to attack by its enemies, but they were no longer defenceless or lacking in numbers; they had besides the support of the French, and a bold front was, perhaps, their wisest course.

Leaving Surat to bear the brunt of Dutch animosity, the Company in 1671 consented to establish a traffic in the far East with Bantam as its emporium. If a direct trade with China was impracticable they would open an indirect one. Although

in the past they had been expelled from the Spice Islands by the Dutch, and often oppressed by them in the Java and Sumatra pepper trade, yet it felt the time now ripe to realise Quarles Browne's dream and make China, Tonquin, Formosa and Japan all its own. A fleet of ships was got ready; a large staff of civil servants were appointed as factors and writers in the far East. Those for Japan were accredited with letters from the King and the Company to the Emperor soliciting his permission to re-establish the trade which had languished since the time of William Adams and Richard Cocks. The factors were instructed to make diplomatic references to the former connection of the English with Japan as the reason of the Company for again offering to open the trade. The agents were particularly instructed to declare that their only view was trade, and on no occasion to interfere in religious matters. As to the English flag and the Cross of St. George, they were to explain that the latter "was not a badge of their being Catholic, but only the characteristic mark of their nation to distinguish English ships, and ought not to excite alarm in the Japanese, that the English had any schemes for detaching them from their established belief". They were to trust to the Japanese sense of honour, too, and to attempt no fortifications (if the Emperor should graciously allow them to erect factories). But at the same time if the Japanese should ask them to land their ships' guns and unhang their rudders according to native custom, they were "to think twice on this head". A distinctive costume

is always impressive, especially in dealing with Eastern peoples, wherefore we find the Company directing its servants "always to wear dresses of English cloth with gold and silver lace, that their appearance might convey to the Emperor and his officers impressions of their rank".

It was many years since the Company had sought out in this manner virgin markets; since its captains and factors had borne royal letters and costly or curious gifts to propitiate an indifferent monarch.

Meanwhile, what of the dreaded French Company? Its fleet of twelve armed ships with £130,000 of stock on board duly left France and arrived at Surat. Here the remnant of a force of two thousand troops were landed (a large proportion having perished on the voyage), together with goods and bullion, and a vigorous policy of under-selling commenced.

The pompous Admiral De la Haye fancied, while the French lay in Swally roads, that because his flag was that of Louis XIV. and not that of a mere company of merchant adventurers, royal honours would be paid to it by Aungier. The latter refusing, a wrangle ensued. Aungier was quick to recognise the imprudence of admitting before the natives that any distinction of degree existed between the familiar emblems of his Company and that of any potentate on earth, even his own sovereign. Such a distinction between King's and Company's flag was then unintelligible, and long continued so, to the native governors and princes.

Yet all these circumstances of rivalry made

Aungier more and more anxious, as soon as Bombay was in a fit state, to induce the Company to sanction the transference of the Presidency thither from Surat.

While Surat was thus exposed to rivalry and attack, Madras was quickly winning its way to an enviable position. About the time that the two arch-wranglers, Winter and Foxcroft, departed, leaving Fort St. George in peace, a new firman was obtained from the Rajah of Golconda granting fresh privileges to the Company. It is true the initial cost of the firman was considerable, but it was felt that the advantages arising therefrom would fully compensate the charges.[1]

From empty warehouses and a stagnant commerce between 1666 and 1669 business was now brisk, and after loading the fleet there remained on hand a considerable stock of goods for the next arrivals.

"It would be expedient, however," wrote the agent, Sir William Langhorne, "to lower the prices of English cloths, etc., particularly those intended for Bantam, where the market has been glutted by the imports of the Portuguese, Danes and French."

From this it may be conjectured that William Baron, who was now at Bantam, was having a hard struggle to maintain himself against a triple assault. Signs were not wanting to show that in

[1] Nevertheless the Company more than once expressed its opinion that its agents should "rather solicit temporary protection from the native governors than to incur heavy charges and uncertain results by seeking firmans from the Eastern sovereigns".—*Letter-book*, 3rd April, 1674.

spite of its energy and capital the overmatched English Company would have to relinquish the islands of the East. The Dutch war particularly injured Bantam, because it occasioned a decision at home to postpone sending any stock or shipping to a port so exposed to the enemy.

"As pepper cannot be obtained from Bantam this year, and 1,200 tons are required for the home sales," it was, if possible, to be procured from the Malabar Coast. Although the far East was to be sacrificed, the Company's general enterprise during the Dutch war was not curtailed, and a fleet of ten ships under a Company's "Admiral," "Vice-Admiral" and "Rear-Admiral" set forth from Madras and the other stations in 1673.

Among the places not then touched by the fleet, but served exclusively by native shipping, was Hugli, in Bengal, not far from the future metropolis of Calcutta. Obscure as it was, its trade was considerable, especially in saltpetre. About this time a quantity of Bengal silks first reached England from Hugli, *viâ* Madras. The Company examined them in Court conclave; it was delighted with their texture, their weight, and, above all, their cheapness. But the colours, particularly the greens and blacks, were deficient. "I foresee," quoth one director, "a great trade in these silks, if the dyes were but better." A brilliant idea came to the Court. Why not send out English dyers to India, and after purchasing as much of these little sought for silks as possible, turn them, by the process of the vat, into desirable commodities at home? Nobody would be

any the wiser, and thus the Company could obtain a virtual monopoly of these Bengal silks.

So we find the directors writing to Sir William Langhorne to look after the little band of dyers, and, above all, "to keep their art secret from the natives," otherwise they would be sure to enhance their price.[1]

After this affair the Company heard from Shaxton, commanding its military forces at Bombay, corroborating Gerald Aungier's opinion as to the reinforcements needed to render Bombay impregnable to the Dutch. "To render their garrison efficient," he wrote, "five hundred soldiers with proper officers must be sent from England." Men died off at such a rate that an annual supply of 100 recruits would be needed to replenish the broken ranks. But if he were given this force, Shaxton expressed himself confident that he could not only defend the island, but could "act offensively against the invaders of any of the Company's factories".[2]

Aungier, besides, was demanding regular court-houses, and the establishment of a police force at Bombay. True, it would cost money, but he "trusted it would add to the confidence which the natives were

[1] *Letter-book*, 13th December, 1672.

[2] In 1673 a force of 6,000 Dutch, under Admiral Van Goen, made an attempt to surprise Bombay, whose possession by the English Company gave them so much offence. But Aungier was not dismayed. He had 300 Englishmen, 400 Topasses or half-caste troops, and some 800 Sepoys, although not then called by this term. The Governor made the most effective show of his little force, his cannon and his ships, and Van Goen, deceived into thinking the English stronger than they really were, drew off in disgust.

beginning to feel that the English would protect them, and in the event of peace would render the island a considerable commercial resort".

Aungier's measures were soon put to the test, and against Shaxton himself. In 1674 the garrison mutinied for a month's pay and their discharge after three years' service. The President hurried to Bombay, publicly executed one of the ringleaders, deported two others and sent Shaxton home for trial. This episode marks the first instance of the Company's exercising martial law—by virtue of its charter.

Meanwhile, the Company soon learnt that the French commercial fleet, under De la Haye, was spreading itself over the East, distributing goods and bullion at cost price, and loading pepper, silks and saltpetre. Really, the Company's servants had as much to complain of French proceedings as did the Dutch, with whom they were at war. De la Haye first succeeded in establishing his factors in Ceylon; from thence he sailed to the Coromandel Coast, and, landing 300 men, took St. Thomé by storm. Thus did the French achieve a footing in that part of the world where, three-quarters of a century later, they were to encounter and fall before the genius of the English Company's servants, Lawrence, Clive and Coote.

The directors waited patiently, amidst all these tidings of attacks, and sieges and intrigues, for good news of the Japanese and Chinese project. It began badly; three of the ships sent to Tywan went to the bottom; the Dutch took two others and William

Gyfford, who sailed to Tonquin, was met with heart-rending obstacles. The King was arbitrary and absolute, the mandarins rapacious, the Prince full of promises, but impecunious, the native merchants "avaricious, jealous and vindictive". The only object of the Company in seeking trade here was the prospect of obtaining raw silk for the Japanese market in exchange for Japanese gold and silver. Tonquin was merely to be considered as a road to Japan. Very little English cloth could be sold "from the dress of the different ranks being fixed," but lead, muskets and saltpetre found purchasers.[1]

As with Japan and China, so with Persia. The Shah had not yet deigned to reply to King Charles's letter, or if so his emissary had been drowned, slain or captured. True, the Company continued, by constant effort, to secure each season its share of the Gombroon Customs, but even these had fallen to a thousand tomans, and generally the Persian trade was insignificant.

Young Henry Oxenden was subsequently sent to Persia to attempt the revival of English interests in that kingdom. He went armed with authority to inform the Shah that the Company's "right to the Customs at Gombroon had been granted for their former services at Ormuz," and that the charges of the Company's present two ships must be paid in ad-

[1] In 1677 we find a small vessel being despatched to Amoy seeking to open a trade with China. "Purchase flowered damasks and white satins, but no taffeties," are the orders given to the pioneer. And as teas were already known and esteemed in Europe, the agent at Bantam is ordered to send home annually "tey of the best sort, to the value of one hundred dollars".

dition to the Customs money when due. Otherwise the protection of the port by the English would be withdrawn. Any refusal of this demand on the part of the Shah of Persia would be considered as equivalent to a declaration of hostilities. This was bold enough certainly. But the Company thought better of it. Oxenden was recalled and became, in 1677, Governor of Bombay.

During Charles's reign it was the Company's practice at its meetings during the autumn and winter to con over carefully its servants' letters, and from them to form an estimate of the shipping and stock likely to be needed at each of its stations in India.

From such estimate the Governor would draw up a memorandum for his own use at the general meetings, such as the following, for example, in 1668-69 :—

Business for this Yeare.

Sent to ye	Shippes.	Stock.
Surat Factory - - - -	3	£75,000
Coromandel Coast - - -	4	90,000
Out of above for Bengal trade -	—	24,000
Bantam - - - - - -	—	10,000
Total -		£199,000
Added later in season - -	1	£13,000

When the whole of the shipping and stock were being got ready in the Thames, it was customary to despatch the smallest of the vessels, with tidings of the outfit and destination of the various ships, to India, so that the stations could regulate their trade accordingly.

When we come to consider the merchandise we find it does not materially differ from that which figures in the Company's accounts fifty years before. We still see broadcloth (the staple of England), tin, quicksilver and lead: but there is far less of such merchandise. The stock has now come to be chiefly bullion and foreign coins—Spanish doubloons and pieces-of-eight, Dutch guilders and Persian xeraphins.

As to the imports the Company made into the kingdom, these continued to be pepper and spices, silks, calicoes, taffeties and saltpetre. The English silk trade, it may be recalled, languished during Puritan times, but at the Restoration it revived prodigiously and we know from the naïve confessions of Mr. Samuel Pepys how indispensable to his career were silk coats, silk breeches, silk stockings and silk waistcoats.

We have already noted the appearance of a new Eastern product on the scene. In 1666 a small parcel of tea arrived in England by a Company's ship and in the following year its agent at Bantam is ordered "to send home by these ships 100 lb. waight of the best tey that you can gett". This same "tey" was, as we shall see, at a later day the principal export from China and a most valuable branch of the Company's commerce. It was the tea of China which was to furnish the means of governing India.

There was no foretelling in Leadenhall Street what might be the trade circumstances in India—not even the market price of the Company's com-

modities.[1] To send out bullion seemed the safe expedient, and came to be more and more relied upon. But even gold and silver were occasionally subject to such fluctuations of value as caused the directors to fling up their hands in astonishment and despair. For instance, in one famous emergency, the Mogul, by his wars in the Deccan and against the Patans, exhausted his treasury. All expedients for paying his troops failed, and Aurangzeb was confronted by the necessity of recourse to the secret treasures of the great Akbar, hitherto deemed sacred. The vast quantity of gold and silver unearthed proved more than sufficient for Aurangzeb's wants and naturally lowered the price of these metals. This caused the Company's bullion to be discounted and French and Dutch merchandise to become enhanced in value.

The Company early in Charles's reign devised measures to regulate the civil and military divisions of the service in such a way as to make the former the paramount authority. "We only keep soldiers that we may defend ourselves and promote

[1] Of the Europe imports, the broadcloths had sold, but with a small profit. The sales of foreign merchandise had rather been attended with a loss, the alum could not be sold and ought for the present to be withdrawn from the Company's assortments. The copper and quicksilver being in demand, had sold with considerable profit; but the balance of gain from the whole sales would do little more than clear the debt at interest, and would not leave a fund for providing an investment for the subsequent year. As the demand for tin and copper was considerable, though the Dutch (with large quantities of finer spices) had sold copper at reduced rates, a large proportion ought to be sent on the next fleet; but toys and glasses would not sell.—Letter from Surat, December, 1672.

our trade," was the Company's maxim. Again and again they make it clear that "we seek no military renown; if we must be armed, it is only for trade". The Ledger must not merely be placed uppermost in its escutcheon, it must be surcharged over the whole. When Aungier gave Captain Langford, chief military officer at Bombay, a seat in the Surat Council, the Company wrote that this was not to be made a precedent. It was fearful that the military might try to gain the upper hand, and so ordered that the civil servants were to apply themselves to acquire a knowledge of military discipline, that in the event either of any sudden attack or of being found better qualified for military than for civil duties, they might receive commissions and have the pay of military officers till the pleasure of the Court should be known.

It was by virtue of this rule and policy that, nearly a century later, some of the most eminent youths in the Company's service were to pass from the writer's desk to the ranks of the army.

Hereafter, too, the Company hoped there would be no unseemly disputes about succession at any of the chief stations in India. To this end it was arranged that the Deputy-President, Gray, was duly to succeed Aungier at Surat (and would have done so but that he died before his chief). At Madras, after Sir William Langhorne, Streynsham Master should succeed; and so elsewhere, the second in command should succeed the first, and the third the second, in the tranquil order of seniority.

CHAPTER XII.

A Sovereign Lord in India.

ALTHOUGH growing more and more prosperous, the Company may be said to be sailing its ship in narrow straits. As if the catalogue of its burdens be not long enough, we have to take note of the revival of interlopers and private trade on a scale seriously injurious to its commerce. From 1657 to 1670 there may be said to have been an immunity from interlopers; as individuals or in association they had disappeared. But now, reappearing, they showed fresh tactics. They sought to break down the Company's monopoly by abuse and misrepresentation at home, and one of the charges by which they hoped to excite public opposition against Leadenhall Street was that it was draining England of her gold and so injuring the commercial credit of the realm.

It had been, as we have seen, the Company's practice to export annually, under licence from the Crown, considerable quantities of bullion and foreign coins as purchasing capital. But so far were its operations from being detrimental to the nation's credit and commerce, that they had been highly advantageous to both. As a counterblast, therefore, to the attacks of its enemies, the Company, in 1674, resolved to issue a statement of its affairs since

1667, which furnishes an interesting summary of its financial proceedings for the period. It is headed: "A particular of all bullion (gold, silver and pieces-of-eight) shipt out by the Company since the year 1667-68 to this present year 1674".

In the year	1667-68	- -	£128,605	17	5
,,	1668-69	- -	162,394	9	10
,,	1669-70	- -	187,458	3	8
,,	1670-71	- -	186,149	10	11
,,	1671-72	- -	186,420	8	3
,,	1672-73	- -	131,300	5	11
,,	1673-74	- -	182,983	0	6

"In lieu whereof, and of several sorts of manufactures sent out by the Comp[a], there had been paid into His Ma[ty] for custom, yearly (*communibus annis*) the sum of about £35,000 per annum.

"And for encreasing the navigation and strength of this kingdom, there hath been built, within that time, and are now in building, twenty-[illegible] sail of ships, from three hundred and fifty to six hundred tons burden, and they have paid for freight and wages yearly, to the amount of £100,000 per annum.

"And have furnished His Majesty's kingdoms of England Scotland and Ireland with all sorts of East India commodities (excepting cinnamon, cloves, nutts, and mace), which, they had not done, would have cost the kingdom farr greater rates to have been supplied from other nations.

"And besides which, there is exported East India goods to other countries (by moderate estimate) double the value of what they have so exported in bullion, which is a very great encrease to the stock

of this kingdom, and the proceed of a greater part thereof is, from time to time, returned in gold and silver.

"And as for the permissions granted to others to send on their ships, the Company not finding it convenient for themselves to trade in diamonds, bezoar stones, amber-greese, musk, pearls, and other fine goods, they have given leave to others to trade therein, paying only a small acknowledgem^{t} to the Comp^{y} for freight, to the end that trade might not only be preserved, but encreased, to the kingdom's advantage: by which, also, this kingdom is not onely furnished with those commodities but there is also sent out from hence, of those fine goods, to a very great value, unto other countries for encreasing the stock of this kingdom."

This candid statement had for the moment the desired effect, and accounts for the large equipments and capital which marked the adventure for the same season. But broadcloth, lead and bullion were, after all, but a poor substitute for intelligent foresight, statesmanship and a firm policy regarding India. It seems all clear enough to us now; and we are inclined to lose patience over the pettiness and obstinacy and timidity which the members of the Court of the Company exhibited in their dealings towards their servants in the East. Their letters to gallant Aungier, who was laying for them the foundation of a greatness they little deserved, are marked by dread and indecision. Empire was even then within their grasp, but they were not of the right stuff to seize it. "Instead of regulating,"

observes Bruce, "the political conduct of the President of Surat with the Mogul or with Sevagee, they founded the instructions on a commercial caution little suited to the difficulties which their servants had to encounter."

It may be that much of this weak and wayward policy was due to the new form of the administration in Leadenhall Street. Three Governors had carried them through half a century. Now, by the new rules, the Governor could only hold office two years in succession. A file of new men, or at least men dependent on the current favour of the generality or proprietors of stock, are seen occupying the chair from 1657 onward, which was fatal to boldness of initiative and to executive continuity. In their ignorance or perversity they framed instructions which their servants could "neither observe nor apply to the situations in which they were placed".

Bombay, almost in spite of the Company, was growing great and prosperous. Its chief servant, Gerald Aungier, was holding Sivaji and the Mahrattas at bay on land and the Siddis at sea, seeking to propitiate both Mogul and usurper, and striving to alter the conditions which obstructed the Company's trade on the west side of the peninsula. All this part of India was plunged in war, principally owing to the warfare between Sivaji and Aurangzeb, but in part also to the decline in the power of the Bijapur and Golconda rajahs and the reigning powers on the Malabar coast. All this was bad enough for trade, the Company thought, without the expense of building Bombay "merely a fort and nothing more".

At Surat, still its chief station, the Company was at least £100,000 in debt, not reckoning the constant accumulation of interest at a high rate. To support its credit a quarter of a million sterling, or at least a million of our present money, was loudly demanded by the Council.

So, clearly a shuttlecock between the contending forces of Mahratta and Mogul and of Siddi sea pirates, and alternately the victim of each, the Company decided in 1674 to send an emissary to Sivaji to obtain his favour. As this action might prejudice it with the Mogul, the mission was one of some delicacy. Henry Oxenden was selected for the purpose, and a grant was obtained from Sivaji conferring certain privileges of trade on the Company. But this compact with the head of the rising Mahratta confederacy was, as we shall see, but little guarantee of peace.

At Madras, Sir William Langhorne described the Company's new French rival as more dangerous than the Dutch, notwithstanding that the latter had recently captured two of its ships and sunk another. The French professed friendship, it is true, but already they were engaged in perpetual intrigues with the native rajahs, and kept the entire coast in a state of unrest. At the same time it was known that the Formosa experiment from Bantam had turned out badly. On the arrival of the Company's ship *Experiment* at Tywan the captain discovered that the sugar and hides, which were the chief articles admitting of a profitable exchange with Japan, were a royal monopoly. As for the returns of Japanese

silver and copper, they went wholly to the army paymasters. There was nothing for it but to weigh anchor and depart. But the *Experiment* unluckily first missed the monsoon and then, after a tedious delay, no sooner got away than she fell in with a Dutch fleet in the Straits of Banka. The upshot was her capture, captain and crew being taken prisoners to Batavia. The ship that brought these tidings to London brought others telling how the Japanese project from which so much was expected had also come to grief. Delboe, the chief factor on board the *Return*, duly landed on 29th June, 1673, at Nagasaki. Seeking out the governor of the port he intimated that he had come to renew the ancient trade between Japan and England which for forty-nine years had been interrupted. The governor's first stipulation was that Delboe must deliver up his guns and ammunition till the Emperor's pleasure could be known. After complying with this hazardous condition and undergoing the strictest examination relating to the causes of the interruption of trade,[1] he was finally informed that "no trade would be sanctioned by the Emperor to a people so nearly allied to the Portuguese, as the King of England had been married to a princess of that country". In vain was it explained that this circumstance did not alter the character of the English nation, who were Protestants like the Dutch. The Japanese retorted by pointing to the English flag

[1] The Company's factor had to explain at length those causes, namely, the Civil War in England and the two successive wars with the Dutch.

with St. George's Cross, and to the Portuguese flag with a similar cross they had captured from the enemy, and declined to argue the case further. The guns and ammunition were politely returned "with an exactness which could not have been expected, and the ship, attended by Japanese boats out of the harbour, allowed to depart". More than this, several Dutch ships having arrived in the harbour which would very likely have given them trouble, the Governor of Nagasaki ordered them not to attempt to follow the Company's ship for two months, that she might gain Bantam unmolested. But Delboe and the rest had no desire to return to Bantam; they cast about whither to take refuge and gain trade, and finally hit on Macao. Although here foiled by Portuguese rivalry, yet it suggested the project of establishing a factory for trade with China. To the circumstance of their meeting with certain well-disposed Chinese at Macao may be ascribed the beginning of the Company's direct China trade.

In 1675 the Company ordered Aungier of Bombay, notwithstanding the slender military force on the island, to "maintain the pass between Tannah and Carranjah and Bombay," which, if he had been able to do it, would have brought about war with Portugal. In a former season the Company had recommended that supernumerary sailors from its ships, who were disposed to engage in the military service at Bombay, might be engaged. Now, because the war with Holland was over, it countermanded the order, forgetting Aungier's need and the danger to which the island was exposed by reason

of the Mogul's or Sivaji's attacks. One reason it gave for not encouraging the settlement of any European on the island save such as might be sent from England under covenant was that it "might stand in the way of the colonists and their families receiving that encouragement which it was its intention to offer to those who might be disposed to proceed direct from England to Bombay".

Then again, we find the Governor and the Court persisting in giving orders to proceed with the Japanese project, in spite of the advice they had received from Delboe, and in framing instructions which it were dangerous to obey.

One after another of Aungier's schemes was repelled by the Company—schemes for the improvement and regeneration of the Western settlements—each to be adopted when he had passed away. He had made a careful study of the Hindu religion and was "the first Englishman who discovered the political uses to which their caste system might be put".[1] He wished to see the old native trade guilds at Bombay receive official recognition, and native magistrates appointed for petty cases. He warmly pressed upon the Company the necessity for draining the tidal swamps, which would be cheaper in the long run than neglect, since they caused so much mortality. But it was like gnawing upon flint. The Company would not understand such zeal: it thought it perverted, and the mention of Aungier's name at its meetings was the signal for groans. His enemies

[1] Hunter, *British India,* vol. ii., p. 218.

suspected him of self-interest and hinted that "he was making up a bundle for himself".

No wonder this loyal servant's heart wavered under such treatment and finally broke. He died 30th June, 1677, at Surat, and his Council at Bombay recorded their emotions on receiving the news. "Multiplicity of words may multiply the sense of our loss, but cannot depict his greatness." Aungier's successor, Rolt,[1] although a capable trader, was quite unable to cope with the hordes of armed Mogul's men and Mahrattas who hovered about Bombay. He did not dare disobey the pusillanimous instructions from home and repel force with force, and so for a time Bombay's very existence as an English settlement hung in the balance, until indeed the arrival of the strong man, both in India and at the Council-board in Leadenhall Street.

Meanwhile the Company had had recourse to native recruits for the Bombay garrison. Besides these early "sepoys," it was proposed to send out Hessians and Pomeranians annually. The exertion of marching in a hot climate having proved so fatal, it was decided to raise a small troop of horse, and to give the command of it to Captain Keigwin, the former Governor of St. Helena. We shall shortly see to what turbulent defiance of authority this choice of a commander was to lead.

[1] Aungier was to have been succeeded by Gray, who had died the year before. That season had been a particularly fatal one for the Company's servants. Besides Gray, Gyfford, Deputy-Governor of Bombay, perished, and also Bake, the Engineer-in-Chief at that place.

The continued mortality at Bombay made it necessary for the new Deputy-Governor, Henry Oxenden, to beg the Court to send him at least 150 recruits every year to make up the deficit in the garrison.

His demand reached the Company when it was in a surly mood. A body of foolish members were disgusted with the expense they had been put to with regard to Bombay, and they were equally disgusted with Surat, where, as punishment, the title of President was changed to Agent, salaries were cut down, and a general policy of internal economy was adopted to reimburse the Company for its losses and the decline in trade. At Bombay, Oxenden's salary was reduced to £120, and the military establishment cut down to 180 privates and a small number of officers. Although this order was afterwards mitigated, and Keigwin, who had been dismissed, reinstated, yet coming at the time it did, it caused the utmost indignation. It was clear that by its policy the Company was doing its best to sacrifice Bombay and its trade and servants on the west coast of the peninsula. A series of other and contradictory orders followed. In vain the agents protested that the island was at the mercy of both foreign and native foe. The port of Bombay soon became the arena in which Mogul and Mahratta fought.

In 1682 Keigwin and his garrison, sick of the perversity and niggardliness of the Company's policy, broke out in revolt. Ward, the Deputy-Governor, was imprisoned, and Keigwin was elected Governor by popular vote. In the name of King Charles he

issued a proclamation dwelling on the "intolerable extortions, oppressions and unjust impositions" of the Company, and taking possession of Bombay for His Majesty. To the latter, as well as to the Duke of York, he addressed long letters charging the Company's representatives with "not maintaining the honour due to His Majesty's Crown," and of making the King's laws "subject to their depraved wills". The bluff and brave old sailor believed that by its conduct the Company had rightly forfeited its title to Bombay. He had no scruple about boarding a Company's ship in harbour and confiscating 50,000 rupees as back pay to himself and fellows. He obtained leave from Sivaji's adherents to grant factories exemption from customs duties on the eastern coast, and £4,000 in compensation for damages which Ward had been unable to collect. Keigwin also made it his business to encourage interlopers, and began to lay plans for undermining the Company's hold in this part of the peninsula. He even issued a manifesto calling on the Council of Surat to arrest the new President who had succeeded Rolt, who, in turn, made ineffective efforts to put down an insurrection with which some of the Surat servants must have sympathised.[1]

At home a wave of popular disfavour bade fair to supplement Keigwin's schemes as regards inter-

[1] One Dr. St. John, who was sent by the Company out to Surat in the capacity of Judge Advocate, investigated the whole affair of the mutiny, and satirically termed Keigwin the "Oliver and Protector of the island of Bombay," and declared him to be wholly influenced by predatory and rebellious motives.



SIR JOSIAH CHILD, BART.

lopers and private trade. In 1680 the private traders, who since the Restoration had not ventured openly to fit out vessels in England for the Indian trade, came out boldly into the market place. The leading spirit, nominally at least, was one Captain Alley, whose project was to "equip a large ship at Cadiz to carry out Europe commodities and to return with Eastern produce, to be disposed of in foreign European markets". On hearing of this scheme Sir William Thomson, the Company's Governor, waited on Lord Shaftesbury and obtained a letter forbidding Englishmen in the East and servants of the Company to lend any countenance to the "interloping rascals". But such measures were not very effectual, and already many of the "rascals" were driving a roaring trade to the Company's disadvantage in India, while in England there was being laid the basis of that opposition which was to end in the establishment of a rival corporation.

It can hardly be doubted that but for the energy and ability of a single man the rivalry would earlier have begun to press sorely on the Company. But long before this there was an able minority at home which took a broader view of the Company's mission in India. Josiah Child, the leader of this minority, was soon at work with pen and tongue. He recognised the importance of influencing public opinion by means of printed argument, and tracts issued by him, under the pseudonym "Philopatris," were sown broadcast over the kingdom. He meted out scorn to those ignorant ones who questioned the value of the Company's trade to England.

"Their trade pays His Majesty about £60,000 per annum custom, and carries out of this kingdom yearly about £60,000 or £70,000 in lead, tin, cloth, stuffs and other commodities of the production and manufacture of England, which is not so considerable, with respect to the quantity as in this. That what we might send to the East Indies of our own manufactures would not be sent at all if the English nation were deprived of this trade, because neither Dutch nor French would ensure the East Indies to our English manufactures, of which we have clear instance in the Dutch trade to Japan, where they industriously avoid introducing our English cloth, which country being exceedingly large, rich and prosperous, and lying in such a northern latitude, might use as much of our English manufactures as Spain and Portugal, if we could gain a footing in that trade, in the endeavour whereof the Company have already lost above £50,000 sterling."[1]

But the Company was not really as bigoted as it had been with regard to exclusive trade. It recognised the necessity of allowing gaps in the barrier of monopoly, through which extreme disaffection or extreme zeal could find vent. While it refused to grant a return to the old system of separate voyages, it gave permission to all English subjects as well as time-expired servants to settle in India and to embark in the port to port trade, and as time went on even allowed a number of "permission" ships, owned by private adventurers, to trade in India

[1] Tract 1681 (Φιλόπατρις). Lord Somers' Tracts.

under its licence and control. All the Company demanded was that there should be no traffic in the "prohibited commodities" (which formed the staple of its own trade) with Europe, and that all privateers should be registered, as well as the quantities and character of their freights. Yet we find in 1676 its Indian servants, particularly at Madras, chafing under this latter restriction as "impracticable and destructive" to their private interests, leaving them "only like those fowl we send afishing with a string about their necks to make them disgorge as fast as they set foot ashore". "Your servants," wrote Langhorne and his Council, "who have gone through the heat and burden of the day for you (refraining from your own rich enclosures of the out and home trade) desire no more but the common and uncorrupted liberty of the Indian port to port trade."

To this the Company replied with a good deal of its old-time asperity. "We shall always be willing to receive advice from our servants when it is offered in such manner as becomes both us and them; but expostulations, and recriminations, and reproaches are not to be borne with, especially when our designs tend their advantage as well as ours: and this shall serve for answer to all the paragraphs of your letter of this kind." [1]

There was another important fact. The Company was by no means at unity with itself on this question of open trade. We have already said that two different factions had grown up in its midst.

[1] *Court Letter-book*, 1677.

They were led by two able men, of whom we have said that one, still in the minority, was Sir Josiah Child.[1] His rival was Thomas Papillon, who headed the reformers and free traders, as the other did the strict monopolists. Child defended vehemently the Company's prerogatives.

Richard Keigwin's defiance of the Company did not outlast the peremptory orders which the King consented to issue, under the sign-manual, commanding him to surrender Bombay. The orders were despatched by a royal man-of-war, which brought out also to Surat a commission to Josiah Child's brother, John, appointing him Admiral and Captain General of the Company's forces on land and sea. It was in vain that the English populace of Bombay urged their leader to resist, with cries of "No Governor but Keigwin!" Keigwin bowed before his sovereign's instructions, and he, Sir Thomas Grantham, the royal emissary, and John Child ended the day's proceedings by a banquet in which old scores were wiped out, and there were toastings on both sides.

The Company afterwards told the King its opinion that "the source of the rebellion could be traced to Mr. Petitt and Mr. Bourchier, two of the Company's civil servants who had been dismissed for encouraging the interlopers, of whom they had now become the leaders". Petitt and Bourchier were charged with attempts to obtain privileges from the Mogul to establish a factory on their own

[1] Child had been victualler to the Navy under Cromwell, afterwards making his peace with Charles II., who created him a baronet in 1678.

account, but it was not easy to bring them to book. Keigwin was not only pardoned, but subsequently received command of a royal frigate.[1]

Another mutiny against the Company about the same time at St. Helena was not to end quite so happily, as we shall have occasion to see. But first let us note the dénouement of the trouble at home. In the year of the "Philopatris" tract the Company's internal difficulties reached a climax. Child read out a draft petition to the King praying for a royal proclamation against interlopers. Whereupon Papillon moved that a clause be inserted in the petition, agreeing to wind up the Company, and meanwhile to invite subscriptions from the public at large for a new joint stock. Child broke out in indignant vituperation against this revolutionary amendment and its supporters; it was rejected, and in the following year Papillon and his friends were ousted from the Court of Committees. The triumph of Child was complete; his vast wealth and unquestioned ability led him at once to the Governorship of the Company. Once in this post he did not delay to enact measures of stringency to crush opposition at home and guarantee the Company's monopoly. With his brother John, a servant in India from boyhood, President of Surat, the two thereafter could act in grim concert for putting the Company on a secure basis.

The late attack roused the attention of the Court and induced them to call upon the proprietors to pay into the Company's treasury, at specified times within

[1] He distinguished himself in the action at St. Christopher's, West Indies, 21st June, 1690, where he perished.

the season, the full amount of their subscriptions, by two instalments, to prove to the nation that they were employing their utmost means to carry on the trade to the East Indies on the largest possible scale. By this spirited effort the Court trusted that they should be able to overset the plans of the interlopers and to bear down the stock, equipments and illegal projects of individuals.

Moreover, the Company's agents were ordered to seize on these illicit traders, and to offer to the parties (the master and purser excepted) the payment of their full wages and an exemption from all consequences if they would deliver up the ships and cargoes. The agents in every port of India were to be indemnified from all consequences of seizing on interlopers and their effects. As for any of the Company's servants "who might encourage them or second their views" they were to be seized and sent to England.[1]

Certainly the Company at this crisis needed all the money the shareholders could muster, for a few months later there came a crash in the London money market owing to the closing of the Exchequer, and the supply of bullion suddenly stopped. On top of this embarrassment came news of the loss of one of the Company's outward bound ships, the *Johanna*, with £70,000 in bullion. A run on its treasury ensued; creditors clamoured for payment of their bills, and it became necessary to devote all the money from the March sales in 1683 to dis-

[1] *Court Letter-book*, December, 1681.

charging the home debts, and Child's first year of office was signalised by no dividend.

Papillon, disgusted at his defeat, sold out his stock, and with his friends now sought to strike a blow at the Company through another agent. This agent was the Levant Company, which had long entertained jealousy of the East India Company.

A century before the import of goods into England from the East, especially from the neighbourhood of the Persian Gulf, had passed through the hands of the Levant or Turkey Company. When the latter's rival opened up a direct trade by sea to replace the caravan route through Turkey its profits were reduced, and when by the stringent repression of interlopers all prospects of participation in the sea route trade disappeared, the Levant directors resolved to petition the King to enable them to trade direct with the Persian Gulf by sea, and thus found practically a new Oriental Company.

This petition was by Child's arguments and influence rejected, and so caused the Whig and Exclusionist tendencies of Papillon and the rest to become more strongly marked than ever. Their speeches attracted to them the sinister attentions of the Court, and directly contributed to their undoing. In August, 1683, the King issued letters patent rendering the Company's powers even more effectual, authorising it to establish admiralty tribunals of its own nominees wherewith to confiscate the ships and goods of its rivals! This was the signal for the malcontents. They instantly denied the right of the Crown to issue any such authority. The

Company accepted the challenge and proceeded to sue one Thomas Sandys, a notorious interloper, in the law courts. Out of this sprang a great trial, in which all men realised that mighty interests were involved, nothing less than His Majesty's prerogative *versus* the East Indian Trade—"the greatest commerce that England ever knew". It lasted more than a year; but the presence on the bench of the Lord Chief-Justice Jeffreys foreshadowed the result. Forcibly and eloquently as might those two eminent lawyers, Sir George Treby and Henry Pollexfen,[1] plead for open trade, "that the sea" (to quote the statute of Edward III.) "might be open to all manner of merchants;" their case—had it even been a sound one—was doomed from the beginning. To that inexorable figure on the bench in scarlet and ermine the question resolved itself into a deliberate affront to the King; the defendant Sandys was denounced as the "first subject that within this Kingdom for near an hundred years last past, hath in Westminster Hall publicly opposed himself against the King's undoubted prerogative in the grant now before us". Sandys lost his case; and that the Company's enemies were regarded as the King's[2] was evinced during the progress of this

[1] Both afterwards in turn Lord Chief-Justice of England.

[2] Yet it was only because the Company had the monarch's favour and not owing to any partiality for Child. Hedges writes: "I waited upon my Lord High Chancellor Jeffreys, accompanied with Sir Robert Crayton and Sir Jeremy Sambrooke. His lordship was pleased to bid me welcome home, and to tell me (amongst other discourse) he did not care if all ye East India Company knew he had a greater kindness and respect for me than he had for Sir Josiah Child."—Hedges' *Diary*, 7th April, 1687.

celebrated trial by the fall of Papillon and Sir Samuel Barnardiston, one of his chief adherents. The latter was charged before Jeffreys as being of a "factious, seditious and disaffected temper," and in default of a payment of £10,000 was sent to prison, where he lay till 1688. Papillon being also hauled into the courts and ordered to pay a similar sum as damages, mortgaged his estates and fled to Holland.

For the present, then, all trade with India apart from the Company had received a stunning blow. The Court informed Child and Gyfford, and the other servants in India, that they "considered this decision to have fully ascertained the extent of their charter and their exclusive privileges, and that they trusted that it would completely eradicate an evil against which they had struggled for so many years; that besides, the trade of the interlopers in this season had followed by heavy losses, rather than by gain to themselves; three of their vessels had arrived while the litigation was pending, two of them almost with dead freight and one with a cargo estimated at £36,000, the sales of which had been unproductive".

No sooner was the decision in the Company's favour declared than Governor Sir Josiah Child got out writs of prosecution against four dozen interlopers, who, now cut off from all legal defence, resolved themselves without hesitation into buccaneers and snapped their fingers (or rather their pistols and cutlasses) at both King and Company. Here we have the genesis of the race of melo-

dramatic pirates, like Kidd, Hand and Avery, whose exploits are for ever associated with the Eastern seas. It was the usual custom of these pirates to clear their vessels at London or Bristol, as bound for Brazil *viâ* Lisbon, and at the Madeiras to muster their men on deck and announce their true destination. Whereat, we learn, there was sometimes a mighty cheer and other times murmurs of disapproval, but on the whole we must believe the cheers outnumbered the murmurs.[1]

But actual piracy was not a necessity, for once at the Company's factories in India, there were plenty of sympathisers and zealous fellow-workers. We are told that "while the Directors fulminated against interlopers from London and Presidents and Councils in India officially looked at them askance, friendly drinking bouts with the intruders took place at the mouth of the Hugli and on the Coromandel Coast". We have seen how Captain Keigwin, during his period of revolt, offered them a warm welcome at Bombay; and indeed whenever they ran across a King's ship or King's officers they were amongst friends. Friendly, too, was the attitude of many of the native governors and banians, who, more especially if they had quarrelled

[1] The interlopers did not always adopt this plan, and an expedient to which they resorted in 1685 bade fair to prove general. Their ships, instead of taking in cargoes at an English port, repaired to Ostend, and, after embarking European produce, paid for by English capital, from thence sailed to India. When the Company first discovered this project it applied to the King, who ordered a man-of-war to intercept the private traders. Two, which were chased in the Channel, managed to escape. The practice eventually suggested the celebrated Ostend Company.

or had a grievance against the Company, extended to them favour. So popular did this systematic intrusion become that it was soon regarded as every whit as respectable, and almost as safe, as trading as a servant of the Company. Perhaps the chief figure among the interlopers was Thomas Pitt, progenitor of an illustrious family, whose career is among the many romances of India, and who came to be one of the strongest of the Company's Presidents.

Among Sir Josiah Child's early acts in Leadenhall Street was one for the regulation and administration of that rocky island, destined to be the seat of so many momentous associations, St. Helena. It will be remembered that in the year of the Restoration Captain Stringer had the Company's orders to divide the island into 150 small farms, to be held by settlers under a small quit-rent in kind to the Company. Slaves were imported and made to work under terror of the lash, to behave under threats of torture and the stake.

In 1673 St. Helena was captured by the Dutch, but was retaken the same year by Captain (afterwards Sir) William Munden. Having been captured by the King's fleet, a question arose as to whether this did not invalidate the grant of 1661, wherefore, on 16th December, 1673, a fresh charter was issued granting the island in perpetuity to the Company. A new Governor inaugurated in the island a new and severer policy, compassing this time the liberties and privileges of the white settlers. In 1682 we find the Company describing its "plan

of administration" for St. Helena. In these instructions the Governor's power is increased, the power of inflicting capital punishment for murder, mutiny or treason (*i.e.*, "any plot or scheme to deliver up the island to foreigners") is granted to him. Minor offences are to be punished by whipping and branding with hot irons. "Should the interlopers touch at the island, a duty of 20s. per ton is to be levied on them," is an item of the new instructions.

The Governor proceeded to act on the Company's authority, and carried matters with such a high hand, flogging and branding whites and blacks impartially, that in 1684, on news of Keigwin's revolt reaching the island, a body of sixty soldiers and planters flying the royal ensign marched to the castle and demanded the release of an imprisoned comrade. The Governor's response was to fire on the mob, killing or wounding seventeen. Others were seized, imprisoned and executed.[1] This was not all. A flaming account was sent home by the Governor, and as those were days of strong measures, the Company determined to make a further example of the St. Helena malcontents.

A fatal one for the opponents of vested authority was this year (1685) of James II.'s accession. One of the King's judges, Sir John Weybourne, was sent out of England with a royal commission, not merely to try, but to condemn and execute

[1] A planter's wife was ordered to have twenty-one lashes, suffer imprisonment, and be ducked three times at the crane for saying that the sufferers were murdered men.—Hunter's *India*, vol. ii.

without mercy all those who had been actively concerned in the St. Helena rising. Of the nineteen condemned, five were executed; the others were finally respited, because their innocence, in spite of the bloodthirsty Governor's charges, was only too manifest.

A few years later and the cries of the wives and widows reached the ears of Parliament. A new King sat on the throne, and the "St. Helena butchery" was fiercely denounced, several of the "butchers" being excluded from the Act of Indemnity. But in 1686 nobody dared impugn the conduct of the Company or its instruments.

Certain events had been happening in the interval which might have caused the Company much concern had they not been swallowed up by affairs of greater moment at home. For example, Bantam, after manifold vicissitudes, had at last fallen a victim to the Dutch acting in concert with the natives, and the Company's servants were obliged to flee to Batavia. Bloodshed and perpetual disappointment had lately marked the conduct of this post. A few years before, in 1676, the agent, White, had, with several others, been barbarously murdered. Now, after a trade to Bantam of eighty years' duration, the Company experienced the "accumulated loss of principal and interest, expended on their dead stock at port and its dependencies, the amount of which can only be conjectured from a retrospect of the whole of their proceedings in the prices paid for grants, the expenses for buildings, and the charges of preserving this seat of their government and trade

under successive encouragements from the King, by his letters patent and by his letters from the King at Bantam". Besides this, the loss of Bantam necessitated the abandonment of the China trade and all those projects which were then slowly evolving for trade in the far East. On the other hand, the calamity had the effect of concentrating the power and commerce of the chief stations on the Indian peninsula.

The foiled Bantam agent and the Council reached Surat, 3rd November, 1683, with money and goods to the value of 39,000 pieces-of-eight, which was charged to the Surat account, as were the debts of the factories formerly subordinate to Bantam, *viz.*, Siam, Tonquin, Tywan and Jambi, amounting to 176,000 pieces-of-eight. As the importance of Surat declined and Madras increased, the Company ordered the minor Eastern factories to be dependent thereafter upon Madras.

As an illustration of the Company's sovereignty and Child's ideas of political economy: it was desired to raise a quit-rent from all the householders in Madras, both native and European, and thereby defray the yearly charges for repairs and fortifications. Streynsham Master had succeeded in raising such a tax, not for repairs or fortifications, but for promoting the sanitation of Black Town. When his post was given to Gyfford, the natives in Black Town petitioned for the abolition of the tax and the new Governor yielded to their request. This was duly reported, and Child and his fellow-directors were greatly vexed with "our too easy agent

Gyfford," and caused a message to be despatched insisting on the principle of the tax.

"Our meaning," wrote Child,[1] "as to the revenue of the town is that one way with another, by Dutch, Portuguese or Indian methods it should be brought to defray at least the whole constant charge of the place, which is essential to all governments in the world. People protected ought in all parts of the universe in some way or other, to defray the charge of their protection and preservation from wrong to violence. The manner of raising which revenue we shall leave to your discretion as may be most agreeable to the humour of the people."

There were other occasions when the advantage of giving some freedom of action to the men on the spot was recognised: as when the Company desired to allow the natives to participate in the municipal corporation which it suggested for Madras.

"If," it wrote, "you could contrive a form of a corporation to be established, of the natives mixed with some English freemen, for aught we know some public use might be made thereof: and we might give the members some privileges and pre-eminencies by charter under our seal, that might please them (as all men are naturally with a little power) and we might make a public advantage of them without abating essentially any part of our dominion when we please to exert it. And it is not unlikely that the heads of the several castes, being made aldermen and some burgesses with power to choose out of themselves

[1] 20th September, 1682.

yearly their Mayor and to tax all the inhabitants for a Town Hall or any public buildings for themselves to make use of, your people would more willingly and liberally disburse 5s. toward the public good, being taxed by themselves, than sixpence imposed by our despotical power (notwithstanding they shall submit to when we see cause), were Government to manage such a society, as to make them proud of their honour and preferment, and yet only ministerial and subservient to the ends of the Government, which under us, is yourselves." After this piece of shrewd political science, the Company went on to say that they knew that what they had said could be "no absolute platform to you. You may make great alterations according to the nature of the place and the people and the difference of laws, customs and almost everything else between England and India; but this will serve as a foundation from whence to begin your considerations and debates concerning this affair, which will require great wisdom and much thinking and foresight."

It resolved also to make Fort St. George capable of resisting native attacks, and also that the cost of strengthening should be defrayed by the natives.

"We would," it wrote under date of 31st May, 1683, "have you to strengthen and fortify our fort and town by degrees, that it may be terrible against the assault of any Indian Prince and the Dutch power of India, if we should happen to have any difference with them hereafter. But we must needs desire you so to contrive your business (but with all gentleness)

that the inhabitants may pay the full charge of all repairs and fortifications, who do live easier under our Government than under any Government in Asia, or, indeed, under any Government in the known part of the world. Their saying they pay Customs is a frivolous objection, and relates only to their security at sea under our Passes and under the guns of our fort in port; but the strong fortifying of the town, etc., and the raising new works, is a security to their lives, houses, wives and children, and all that belongs to them."

This order produced the most violent feeling amongst the native population, and the representatives of the various castes met and drew up a petition against it, denouncing as oppressive the new tax.[1] But the President and Council stood firm, pointing out that the most that was demanded was some nine fanams per annum, while the bulk of the population would only pay three fanams. So in the end, after threatening expulsion, the Company's end was gained.

No longer could the Company justly be assailed for ignorance of Indian affairs; its consciousness of its own position in India is exemplified in the following correspondence.

In 1685, when the King of Golconda was threatened by Aurangzeb, in his extremity he called upon the English at Madras to help him. The Council

[1] The popular memory of the opposition to this imposition, which led to open riot in 1684, is still preserved in Madras in the name of "Wall Tax Street," leading to the remains of the west wall.—Birdwood.

wrote to the Company for orders. "We know," was the response from home, "the King of Golconda is rich enough to pay for any assistance you give him, either in diamonds or pagodas; and therefore we intend to be at no charge for his assistance against the Mogul, but what he shall pay us for beforehand or put diamonds into your hands for the security of our payment, both principal and interest."

As for the King of Golconda's written appeal, "You may," it went on, "acquaint him in a decent and friendly manner that we are none of his subjects; wherein we would have you be guided by the old proverb, '*Suaviter in modo, fortiter in re*'. But if, nevertheless, he pretend to any dominion over your city, you may, when you are in a good condition, tell him in plain terms that we own him for our good friend, ally and confederate and sovereign and lord paramount of all that country, except the small territory belonging to Madras, *of which we claim the sovereignty, and will maintain and defend against all persons and govern by our own laws without any appeal to any prince or potentate whatsoever* except our sovereign Lord the King; paying unto him, the King of Golconda, our agreed tribute of 1,200 pagodas per annum."

This uncompromising assertion of the Company's authority closed with a yet more spirited passage, which ought to have put heart even into a less courageous man than Gyfford. For the Company threatened that "if ever he break with you upon these terms, we require you to defend yourselves by arms and from that time renounce paying him any

more tribute. It being strange to us that while he is oppressed by the Mogul on one hand and a handful of Dutchmen on the other, you should make yourselves so timorous and fearful of asserting our own King's just right and prerogative to that important place."

Thus Child, so hot for the sovereignty of the Company in Indian affairs, could still shelter himself behind royal authority and threaten to wield the King's sword on occasion.

In truth, the adventurers in Leadenhall Street now began to realise their strength in India. "Though our business is only trade and security, not conquest, yet we dare not trade boldly or leave great stocks where we have not the security of a fort." Less and less they dreaded hostilities.

"The subjects of the Mogul," wrote the Company a few years later (27th August, 1688), "cannot bear a war with the English for twelve months together without starving and dying by thousands for want of our trade; but because by our war we obstruct their trade with all the Eastern nations, which is ten times as much as ours and all European nations put together. Therefore we conclude Fort St. George is now much more worth and secure to us than ever it was in the mean King of Golconda's time: for he had little at sea for us to revenge ourselves upon; but now if new injuries should be offered us we have a fat enemy to deal with from whom something is to be got to bear our charges. Therefore we conclude that the Mogul's Governors will never give us fresh provocation, nor deny you

St. Thomé or anything else you shall reasonably and fairly request of him. No great good," it was philosophically concluded, "was ever attained in this world without throes and convulsions, therefore we must not grudge at what is past."

At the outset, then, was the risk of offending the still great, but already expiring, power which at this juncture had swung its armies round the south-eastern part of the peninsula within hail of the English fort and settlement of Madras. Aurangzeb, stung at last to personal action by the fierce Mahratta danger, had quitted for ever his capital and put himself at the head of the forces of his Empire. For the next five and twenty years the entire Indian peninsula was to be the scene of turbulence, carnage and desolation. The curtain went up on the drama of ruin which was to precede by seventy years the Company's splendid triumph and ultimate paramountcy. More and more forcibly was it borne in upon the directors at East India House that for the old policy of firmans and flattery, propitiation and inertia, must be substituted the new one of forts, defiance and righteous aggression.

Some thought it of ill omen that, when they had first decided to embark on this forward policy, the mutinous Keigwin held Bombay, the Dutch were masters of Bantam, and the interlopers increasing in such numbers threatened them with grievous loss of trade. But the dark clouds had passed, and the two brothers Child, one at the India House and the other at Surat, saw at last Aungier's

dream of making Bombay the chief metropolis of English trade and influence in India completely realised.

In the most distant of the provinces of the Mogul Empire there was nothing to check the local Nawab from oppressing the European traders as he chose. When, in 1677, the Company's Bengal factories were under the Madras Council, the Nawab Shaista Khan was warned that if his extortions continued the factories would be withdrawn, but without effect. Three years later he paid no more attention to a firman from the Mogul himself. Here was a situation that required careful handling. "For the first time in its history," says Hunter, "the Company found itself under a Mogul oppressor whom the Emperor's firman failed to control and whom its petitions and presents were powerless to appease."

One great barrier to a complete understanding between the Company and its servants had always been that the former did not know India and the latter did not know Leadenhall Street. Very rarely was this barrier broken down — seldom that one lived to serve and be served. When it happened so, it was nearly always the servant who rose to be director. But early in Child's time, when the difficulties of the Bengal trade proved too puzzling to the directors, when the conflicting testimonies of the Bengal Agent and Streynsham Master could not be reconciled, the Court decided to send out one of their own number, "with special powers to be agent and Governor of their affairs in the Bay of Bengal and of the factorys subordinate to it at

Cossimbuzar, Patna, Ballasore, Malda and Dacca". William Hedges, the first independent agent and Governor in Bengal, with a guard of honour of twenty European soldiers, arrived at the Mogul garrison town of Hugli, in July, 1682. Two years later the Company heard from him that "three things must be done to make ye Honble Company's trade prosperous in this country.

"1st. The interlopers must be suppressed in England. ''Tis impossible to be done here, I see they will dayly grow upon us without effort.'

"2nd. Custom must not be paid. If we pay 3½ per cent. one year we shall pay 5 the next to excuse opening, pricing, weighing and measuring our goods; and by degrees these people's exactions will grow to be insufferable. Ye duty of customs (computing the trade which will, and may easily be carryed on yearly in Bengal), I conclude, will be taken on £600,000 stock. The Custome of that money, inwards, at 3½ per cent., and custome on its returnes home at 3½ per cent. more, is 7 per cent., which will amount to £42,000 per annum; for ye halfe of which charge I will venture my life and fortune to take off the payment of Custome forever, and to agree with this King upon such capitulations as shall be not only a vast advantage, but a perpetual honour to our English nation.

"3rd. A General Regulation in ye factorys, for which there's a necessity of investing greater and more absolute power in ye Agent; though he prove never soe great a villaine, he must bee entrusted (as the Directore is) for ye present, and then a better

sent in his place. He must be feared, or the Company's business cannot be done to advantage."

But Hedges was not the man for the work. He got into difficulties with his subordinates, especially the Bengal Agent, Job Charnock, and was eventually recalled.

In Persia we first see a glimmering of a retaliatory policy on the part of the Company in 1683. In the year following it so far yielded to the suggestions of its servants as to order the despatch of "a respectable moral force" into the Persian Gulf to bring the Shah to terms. The arrears of Customs at Gombroon now amounted to close upon £500,000 sterling, and the Company was weary of petitioning for payment. Sir Thomas Grantham, therefore, was ordered with a fleet to the Gulf to make prizes of the Persian's ships and property equivalent to the arrears of customs and the other losses. After which he was to notify the Shahbandar of Gombroon of his readiness to restore them on condition that the Shah of Persia would agree to secure to the Company the regular payment of their moiety of the Customs. This was not all. Grantham was next to employ the force he commanded to seize the Persian ships navigating to the Mogul's dominions, "or to those of any Prince or power in amity with the Company, but to retain only the goods of Persian subjects found on board". The valiant Admiral duly arrived off Gombroon, only to be confronted by a large Dutch fleet and a body of Persian troops. He therefore received on board such goods as he could and retreated peacefully to Surat.

As the civil and military administration in India grew more compact, the Company had, in 1685, obtained royal permission to appoint President Child (now created a baronet) to be "Captain General and Admiral of all their forces by sea and land, in the northern parts of India from Cape Comorin to the Gulf of Persia". He was ordered to be attended by a bodyguard of thirty English grenadiers, under Captain Shaxton. Sir John Weybourne, whose St. Helena proceedings brought him unenviable fame, was appointed Vice-Admiral and Deputy-Governor of Bombay, at a salary of £250 per annum.

The seat of the Company's government was, moreover, ordered to be transferred from Surat to Bombay, all stores being kept in the castle of Bombay and all the larger ships to anchor in harbour. Yet a subordinate agent and council were to remain at Surat (now reduced to the status of a factory) to preserve trade communication between Surat and Persia.

This appointment of Child constituted what at a much later day was termed the Governor-Generalship of India. He was the first to have jurisdiction over all parts where the Company had stations to trade, even distant Bengal. He was vested further with discretionary powers to make war or to conclude a peace with the Mogul, according to circumstances. Moreover, he was directed to "seize the goods and the vessels of the Kings of Siam, Bantam and Jambee," as potentates who had inflicted insult and injury on the honourable Company. For at the latter, we are told by a contemporary interloper,

the natives were accustomed to sneer and rudely ask, "What has your sword done? Who ever felt your power? You can scarce keep Bombaim which you got, as we know, not by your valour but by compact."[1]

The Company's new policy grew apace. It had long striven vainly to obtain permission from the native powers to coin money at Madras (a permission forty years before extended to Francis Day); it now resolved to abandon the effort and secure the necessary authority from its own sovereign, King James. The latter listened indulgently to the petition of a corporation in which he had personally so heavy an interest, and in April, 1686, granted letters patent which, besides conferring and renewing all the former charters of the Company,[2] expressly empowered it "to coin any species of money in their forts usually coined by the princes of the country, provided it should be equal in weight and fineness to such princes' standard". This money was to be current throughout India. It was the only authority the Company now required, and under it the President and Council of Madras were ordered to set up a mint and to "take particular care that the coins, in stamps, inscriptions and fineness should resemble those issued by the Mogul and Rajahmahl, particularly the rupees". Such imitation might offend Aurangzeb, but as the Company was bent upon warring with that potentate, this was a worth-

[1] Fryer.

[2] The Company was also, by this instrument, empowered to erect courts of judicature and to exercise martial law during the war in India in any place within their limits.—See *English Charters*.

less consideration. At the same time, the English being allies of the King of Golconda, it was thought advisable to gain his authority to coin rupees for circulation in his dominions, and to act likewise in future with all other friendly rajahs in India.

Thus Bombay and Madras emerge about this time as Regencies under protection of King James, whose authority had been delegated to the Company. The Company, in consequence, ordered His Majesty's Union flag always to be used at these places. Besides this, Madras town, in 1687, was erected into a corporation after the English pattern, with a mayor and twelve aldermen (three Company's servants to nine natives and non-officials) who were to be justices of the peace and to wear scarlet gowns, and 120 burgesses, to wear white gowns. A town clerk and a recorder were appointed and all the subordinate officers were to be elected by the mayor and aldermen, subject to the approbation of the President. Two silver gilt maces were to be carried before the mayor "and a silver oar before the judge advocate"—quite on the approved old English model.

This step was not unaccompanied by a curious difficulty. Questions agitated the Privy Council whether such charter should proceed from the King under the great seal of England or from the Company under its broad seal, from being vested with a right to exercise a delegated sovereignty in India. The whole argument is retailed in the Company's letter to Elihu Yale, its President at Madras, dated 12th December, 1687, and so well deserves perusal that we must find a place for it here.

"The Governor and Deputy were commanded that last night being Sunday, to attend His Majestie, at the Cabinet Council, when our intended Charter for incorporating Fort St. George into a body politique, consisting of Mayor, aldermen, and burgesses, was largely debated before His Majestie. One of the Council (being a lawyer) seemed to be of opinion that it was best the Charter should pass immediately by the King, under the Great Seal of England. His Majestie asked the Governor his opinion, who replied, that what His Majestie thought best the Company should alwais think so; but if His Majestie expected the Governor's private opinion, he had ever been of opinion that no person in India should be employed by immediate commission from His Majestie, because, if they were, they would be prejudicial to our service, by their arrogancy, and prejudiciall to themselves because the wind of extraordinary honour in their heads would probably make them as haughty and overbearing, that we should be forced to remove them; and we instanced particularly Sir John Wyborne and Dr. St. John; in conclusion, His Majestie did so apprehend it, as to think it best that the Charter should go under our own seale, because the Corporation must be always in some measure subject to the control of our President and Council, and so at length it was agreed, and the Charter is now engrossing."

The action marks an important step in the Company's policy, as it clearly imported that thenceforward Presidents and factors were to consider the

English King's charters and the Company's orders to rank above Indian laws and firmans, in fact, to be the only constitution and regulations under which they were to act.

A word as to the French East India Company before we enter upon a chapter discussing the organisation of the Company in James's reign. In 1674 its agent, Martin, obtained Pondicherry from the King of Bijapur, and afterwards Aurangzeb granted the French Chandernagore on the Hugli. Finding itself straightened in 1682, the French Company gave permission indiscriminately to French subjects and foreigners to trade to the Indies for five years on the company's ships, provided they paid a certain freight charge agreed upon, on condition that the goods brought home should be deposited in the company's warehouses, and be subjected to a duty of five per cent. But this ingenious bid for trade was not found feasible, and in two years the proprietors obtained a repeal of the regulation, and their charter remained in full force. In 1684 the management was placed in the hands of twelve directors residing in Paris. Although the company was in a parlous state, half of the capital of £600,000 sterling being expended without any return, yet, as we shall see, the French were soon to be in a position to make trouble for the English in India.

CHAPTER XIII.

Eighty Years After.

THE reign of James II., so little propitious for the liberties of the nation, beheld the old East India Company at the flood tide of its prosperity.[1] Royal charters could scarce bestow upon the merchant adventurers more power; there was none to interfere with their profits or their conduct of Anglo-Indian affairs.

Those who are continually reminding us that the Company's importance and political authority date only from 1750 or 1765 will do well to consider its position in 1685. The monarch himself was a member ; and it was only by virtue of his proprietorship of stock or by its especial request, not as King of England, that he asserted any voice in its business. It could now boast "jurisdiction civil and military, including martial law, the right of coining money in its settlements and of employing troops and fleets alike against native princes and European interlopers". The royal admirals and officers of justice were commanded to aid in the enforcement of those powers on land and on sea. No longer was it, as exultantly

[1] "Having now, and necessarily, so many towns, forts and garrisons, ships of war and tenders, we cannot maintain them under the expense of £200,000 per annum, besides the infinite charge of presents, buildings, guards and ships."—East India Company's Statement to Parliament.

announced its Governor, a body of "mere trading merchants," but "a sovereign estate in India," ruling from Leadenhall Street with an inflexible rod. The hostile faction within had been silenced; that without was treated with contempt. The Committee of Twenty-Four spoke with the voice of a single man. We cannot discern any other period of the Company's history when the machinery of its administration was so nicely adjusted; when its servants in the East were so responsive to the note sounded in Leadenhall Street. Disregarding for the space of a chapter the first far-away murmurings of that other note sounding from Westminster Hall which was to put an end to this harmony, let us dwell only on the Company's success. Such an interval is not least appropriate for glancing at the springs, the wheels and balances of this celebrated commercial engine in the last quarter of the seventeenth century.

Much of the operating movement has revealed itself from time to time in the natural course of our narrative. Already we seem familiarly to have taken our stand opposite the portals of East India House,[1] with its grotesque façade capped by the carved wooden mariner, and watched the portly committee-men come and go with mien denoting

[1] From 1604 to 1621 the Company conducted its business in the house of its first Governor, Sir Thomas Smith, in Philpot Lane. In 1621 it became established in Crosby Hall, Bishopsgate Street, then owned by Lord Northampton, remaining there until 1638, when it moved to Governor Clitheroe's house in Leadenhall Street, with which its fortunes were afterwards associated. In 1648 it set up in the house adjoining Sir Christopher Clitheroe's house, which in 1726 underwent considerable alterations and a new front.—See Birdwood, *Report on Old Records*.

affairs of consequence. The thin but steady stream of brokers, petty merchants, money changers, ship captains and alien nondescripts from all climes, plying all day long between here and the Royal Exchange, then as now the very omphalos of the City, has long seemed a part of our story. Only second in importance to High 'Change, which so smote the bland fancy of Addison, were those great meetings at East India House, when Armenians, Jews, Dutchmen and Copts hung about in company with speculative London aldermen to await the issue of deliberations which had a very direct bearing on their own fortunes.

Prior to 1672 the Company banked with Alderman Backwell, a broker in a large way of business in the days of Charles II., who likewise kept the accounts of His Majesty the King, James, Duke of York, Prince Rupert, the Duke of Orleans, and "all the principal nobles and merchants of the time". In 1670 the Company had large transactions with Backwell's bank; the payments to its credit in 1671 were £237,900. Backwell, "at the Unicorn in Lombard Street," was ruined in the following year by the closing of the Exchequer by Charles II. Two of his sons afterwards married daughters of Sir Francis Child (no relation to the Company's Governor), and were taken into partnership. The accounts are still to be seen in the old ledgers at Child's,[1] where, after Backwell's failure, the Company kept its money. During this reign, never were its dividends so high—

[1] Birdwood, *Report on the Old Records.*

its total capital was all but returned in a single year; a steady stream of gold poured into its strong boxes; its influence on the money market was irresistible.

The shareholders or proprietors were very few; less than eighty all told, of whom less than a dozen controlled the entire capital. In 1750 there were 500; a generation later still they numbered more than 2,000. The court of twenty-four committees or directors may be said, therefore, literally to have been the Company. According to an anonymous satirist of the Company:—

> Some of these Men have slept within the Chair,
> Have coughed in Fur and have on Custards fed,
> When thou, perhaps, hast made a meal of bread.
> Their chiefs are Aldermen, their Rulers knighted,
> And their swoln bags forbid 'em to be slighted.

At their head always, whether in the chair or not, was Sir Josiah Child, who himself owned almost a third of the capital. Child and his fellow-directors in London made it clear that, although their power and prestige in India waxed greater and greater, they parted with none of it to their servants; they held and meant to hold the reins. "We are the Company—we rule; you serve and obey," is the burden of many letters at this time. The Company had always a sharp rap for any council of its factors which presumed to know their own business better than their master at home. "The great trouble we labour under," once it wrote, "is that you cannot get out of your cavilling way of writing or perverting or misconstruing, procrastinating or neglecting our plain and direct orders to you; as if you

were not a subordinate but a co-ordinate power with us: which has and will (till you conform to our known minds and intentions) force us to make more changes in your council than anything else could have induced us to do; of which we hope we shall have no more hereafter, but that your well understanding and performance of our orders will cause us to change the style of our letters to you."

Leadenhall Street ever aspired to domineer rigorously. Thus we find, in Fox's Regulating Bill, a century later, that "strict obedience was enjoined to the commands of the directors because Mr. Hastings, whenever a strong motive occurred, disobeyed them". Pitt's bill also laid stress upon obedience. The tendency was always to disobey injunctions issued from London, because such commonly ran contrary to the current of opinion and events in India. The two atmospheres were so different withal, as were the respective standpoints of master and servant. Truly, the wonder is that the commands of the directors were so well, not that they were so ill, obeyed—a remark which, by the way, has been observed concerning mankind and the Mosaic Decalogue.

Yet in spite of its occasional asperity Sir George Birdwood properly lays stress on "the familiar relations always maintained between the Company and their servants in India based . . . on a devoted sense of their responsibility in each other's well-being. When the Company was first founded, the feudal tradition of the affiliation of servants to their masters had not yet become obsolete in England and during

the second half of the sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth centuries it was indeed strengthened by the elevating spiritual significance given to all the conditions and concerns of our temporal existence by the prevailing puritanism of the times."[1]

Glancing first at the servants at home we find them subject at this time to a regular scale of salaries voted in 1657, and that they were annually chosen or confirmed in office. The wages paid seem very small in these days[2]: even allowing for the difference in money values, but they were much larger than those allotted generally to the Company's servants in the East.[3] On the other hand, those at home had no perquisites in the shape of private trade, their surroundings were without the glamour of novelty or the excitement of danger, and they ran little chance of rising to the more lucrative posts through death and disablement compared with those who, it was said, "walked but in charnel houses" in India.

The servants at the India House and at Black-

[1] *First Letter-book.*

[2] The accountant-general received £220; his assistant, £80; writers of letters and keeper of calico warehouse (a strange collocation of duties), £150; cashier, £150; his assistant, £80; husband and keeper of saltpetre warehouse, £80; surveyor of shipping, £50; paymaster of the mariners, £30; beadle and porter, £30; keeper of pepper warehouse, £140; solicitor, £20; keeper of the "blue" or indigo warehouse, £80.

[3] According to the byelaws passed in 1621, the election or removal of the Company's servants, either at home or abroad, was to be "performed by the order of the Ballotting Box or by erection of handes". On election by the Company they should "presently take their oaths openly in a Court of Committees (*i.e.*, Directors), and shall give bonds with sufficient suerties for their true performance as the said Court shall require".

wall set an example to the town in the strictness of their behaviour. The Company's paternal eye was ever upon them : they were forbidden to attend play-houses, dancing schools or taverns. It built a chapel at Poplar for the benefit of its dockers and warehousemen, many of whom, by reason of the distance to Stepney Church, were "deprived of the means of grace for their precious souls". For its old servants and orphans it provided almshouses and directed that the psalms and lessons together with a passage from the Bible should be administered twice daily.[1]

It is certain that so far as work went all the Company's servants at home fully earned their allotted salaries, from the accountant-general to the beadle, for the Company was never a friend to idleness. It was under Governor Child, a financier of method, that the Company's book-keeping and correspondence, as well as its trade generally, became systematised and much unnecessary labour was dispensed with.

At first when the Company's ships returned, the subscribers to the separate voyages were obliged to take payment for their investment in spices and calicoes, afterwards selling these on their own account, often not very advantageously or conveniently. But after the practice of "candle auctions" had been instituted, matters were bettered. A public notice was exposed at the Royal Exchange announcing the date of such auction of silks, indigo, pepper, saltpetre, etc. An inch of lighted candle

[1] *MS. Court Book.*

was set up at the desk in the Great Hall and bids on a given parcel of goods demanded from all those present. The highest bid received at the moment of the flame's extinction was successful. Occasionally several hundred lots were thus disposed of at a single sale. None were allowed to bid, however, who had not paid up their shares or who had "wronged the Brethren," such figuring in the Black List which was read out at the opening of the ceremony.[1]

Even Child had little notion of the complicated system, or want of system, which ruled the accounts in the old pre-Restoration days. Each successive group of subscribers under the charter was naturally concerned only with its own venture and the disposal of its "remaines," or dead stock, such as buildings and shipping, to the next group. As time went on and the separate interests multiplied, the factor found it harder and harder to keep the liabilities of each set of adventurers separate.[2] When it came to paying a dividend, the profits were ascribed each to the several cargoes, as, for example, in a dividend of 25 per cent. in 1641, five-eighths were to be paid

[1] In 1669, when the Lords Commissioners of the King's Ordnance wished to purchase 400 lb. of saltpetre they wrote to the Company to say that in their opinion "it was not honourable nor decent for the King to buy at the candle as other common persons did . . . and therefore insisted to buy it by contract."—*MS. Court Book.*

[2] Hunter tells us of a ship which arrived in the Thames "with such confused accounts that the directors, after three or four days' dispute, still differed as to whom the cargo belonged". As to the great debt of £100,000 in India, "who owes it no man can tell".—*British India*, vol. ii., p. 173.

in silk, two-eighths in calico, and one-eighth in cloves.[1]

Simplification of trade was accompanied by simplification in management, and the establishment of separate committees (in the modern sense) to transact special business. Of these committees none were so important or so diligent as that which dealt with correspondence.

From the foundation of this system of business, as still conducted in the India Office, the name of Sir Josiah appears on the "Committee for Letters," "and," declares Sir Henry Yule, "there can be no doubt that he was for many years predominant in the dictation of the more important part of the Company's correspondence with the settlements in India, and that we may ascribe largely to him the pungent style, the severe rebuke, the strong antipathies expressed for some and strong predilection for others of the Company's servants which that correspondence contains; and not less the occasional utterances of long experience in business, of large views and flashes of ambitious prevision, which are to be traced in it during this period".[2]

We have already noted specimens of the Company's instructions to its servants as dictated, or largely influenced, by this able man. Once, acknowledging a letter of the 20th of January, 1677, "subscribed by the quondam Agent and Council," it wrote that, "although it be voluminous in words and haughty, vaine, and unmannerly expressions

[1] *Court Book.* [2] Hedges' Diary.

such as it becomes not any of you to subscribe, nor us to receive, yet it is so empty of substantial matter relating to our business, that wee finde very few particulars in it that need or deserve our answer, other than such as are inoffensively and more pertinently mentioned in the letter and address of the present Agent, where as we meet with them, you shall have a full answer thereunto.

"But before we get off this, wee must note to you that it is very strange and monstrous that severally in your particular letters to us as private persons you should write with so much deference and obsequiousness as we neither desire nor expect; and yet to the Court in General should address yourself in such an affronting and unmerchantible stile, as becomes not any man of breeding to write to his equall. Wee shall conclude this paragraph with telling you that no man living in our Service whatever he be, shall write to us such kinde of language with Impunity."

As the century wore on and thus saw the Company from its habitat in the City of London taking up the position of a sovereign power in India, it naturally demanded from its servants abroad something more than those qualifications which go to make up the successful trader. No better refutation of the common charge that "sordid thrift" was its "only science" is to be had than the letter it addressed in James II.'s reign to the Council of Madras on the subject of its appointment of the able Nathaniel Higginson.

"Let none of you," it wrote, "think much or

grudge at the speedy advancement of Mr. Higgin son. We do not do it out of any partiality to him, for he has no relation here to speak for him, nor ever had the ambition to think of such a thing himself; neither have we done out of any ill feeling or disrespect to any others now being of our Council, but sincerely, as we apprehend, for the public good; knowing him to be a man of learning and competently well read in ancient histories of the Greeks and Latins, which, with a good stock of natural parts only can render a man fit for government and political science, martial prudence and other requisites for ruling over a great city. This we say with some experience of the world, and knowledge of the laws and customs of nations can alone qualify men for such a government, and for treaties of peace or war or commerce with foreign princes. It is not being bred a boy in India or studying long there and speaking the language, understanding critically the trade of the place, that is sufficient to fit a man for such a command as the Second of Fort St. George is or may be in time; though all these qualifications are very good of their kind and essentially necessary to the well carrying on of the trade; and little science was necessary formerly when we were in the state of mere trading merchants. But the case is altered from that, since His Majesty has been pleased by his Royal Charters and during his Royal will and pleasure to form us into the condition of a Sovereign State in India, that we may offend or defend ourselves, and punish all that injure us in India, as the Dutch do."

In the East the whole mass of the Company's servants[1] might now be comprehended in the grades of merchants, factors and writers. "Some Blue-coat boys also," writes Fryer, "have been entertained under notion of apprentices for seven years, which being expired, if they can get security, they are capable of employments." The writers were obliged to serve for £10 per annum, giving a bond of £500 for good behaviour, during the period they served under some of the aforementioned officers. After which they were appointed factors, and rose to preferment and trust, according to seniority or favour, and therefore had to furnish a £1,000 bond, their salary at the same time being augmented to £20 a year, for three years. Entering into new indentures, they were made senior factors, and finally merchants after three years more, out of which class were chosen the chiefs of factories, when posts fell vacant, and were granted £40 per annum during their stay in the Company's service, besides lodgings and victuals at the Company's charges.[2]

[1] Candidates for the Company's service were first nominated by one of the Court, and thereupon submitted a formal petition for appointment. These petitions were referred to a Committee of Accounts for examination, and afterwards the candidates were elected by ballot.

[2] In the *Court Minutes*, 13th April, 1694, is the following entry concerning Christ's Hospital youths, from whom had previously been drawn most of the apprentices in India: "The Governors of Christ's Hospital moving the Court by Mr. Hawes their treasurer that the Company would please to accept in their service ten hospital youths to be bred up in India as their apprentices. The Court were pleased out of their charity and respect to that foundation to entertain them to serve the Company seven years at the salary usually given to the Company's writers, and whereas all other their servants do pay their

Up to the period of the Restoration the factor was the lowest rank of the Company's servants, but in 1662, several youths were sent out to Fort St. George as apprentices for seven years at nominal wages ("for the provision of clothes") "to be employed as you shall think fitting". The success of this experiment seems to have incited the Surat Council to beg that "half a dozen youths of mean parentage who write good hands and shall be willing to be employed upon all occasions without murmuring" be sent to that factory. But owing to the Dutch war it was not until 1668 that the "writers" —twelve of them—at £10 per annum, besides two "apprentices" at £5, set sail. This is the first use of the term "writer," which, while equivalent to the "schryver" of the Dutch Company's service, also sprang naturally out of the occupation: indeed they are first spoken of by the Court in 1666 as "penmen". To these fell the labour of copying the letters and "consultations," and that they acquitted themselves most creditably the hundreds of volumes to-day preserved at the India Office testify.

After 1668 factors and writers are despatched annually, with only occasional apprentices, until 1694, when the latter grade was merged with the writers.[1]

passage outwards the Company are pleased to bear that charge themselves, the Governors allowing the four pounds a head, as was formerly done, towards their transportation unto the Captain of the ship to make fresh provision for them in their voyage."

[1] Factors continued to be sent out regularly to the Company's factories in the East until the 4th January, 1765, when the last batch were consigned to Bencoolen; thereafter only writers were appointed.

The Company fixed the rank of its servants on the principle of seniority "as the rule of succession to offices of trust".

"For the advancement of our apprentices," ran its orders of 1675, "we direct that after they have served the first five years they shall have £10 per annum for the last two years; and having served those two years, to be entertayned one yeare longer as writers and have writers' sallary; and having served that yeare, to enter into ye degree of factors, which otherwise would have been ten yeares. And knowing that a distinction of titles is, in many respects, necessary, we do order that when the apprentices have served their times, they be stiled factors; and factors have served their times, to be stiled merchants; and merchants having served their times to be stiled senior merchants."

The President had to give a bond of £5,000 sterling before he entered on his appointment. In addition to this, half his salary was withheld at home until his return to receive it in person, which was the case with the other chief officials. The president at Surat received £500, the accountant, £150, the general purser, £100, the warehouse keeper, £70. The secretary received £40, five factors, £30 each, and the writers, £20. The chaplain usually received £100. But in addition to these sums were diet and lodging and, in the case of the four members of Council, an allowance for outside maintenance was made.

An East India Company's president was held to be a great man in India, and if an equal measure

of distinction was not accorded him on his return home, his wealth usually enabled him to cut a most respectable figure in town or country.

Next to the presidencies of Surat and Madras the places most aspired to were those of deputy governor of Bombay and agent in Persia, "the first a place of great trust, the other of profit" (usually falling in rotation to the secretary at Surat).

Whenever the Surat President stirred abroad he had a "noise of trumpets" and was borne along on a palanquin, preceded by a caparisoned horse of state. A mighty fan of ostrich feathers, borne by a native, kept off the sun from his excellency's countenance, and a guard of English soldiers, in double file, strode beside the palanquin. The deputy at Bombay had something less of state, "only forty Moormen" as an escort "and a flagman carrying St. George, his colours swallow-tailed in silk, fastened to a silver partisan, with a small attendance of horse with silver bridles and furniture for the gentlemen of the house, and coaches for ladies and council".

At Madras similar pomp was observed with respect to the President. His personal guard consisted of some 300 blacks, besides a band of 1,500 men ready on summons. He never went abroad without "fifes, drums, trumpets and a flag with two balls in a red field, accompanied with his council and factors on horseback, with their ladies in palenkeens".[1]

[1] "This day Captain Alley went to visit the Fousdar. . . . Alley went in a splendid Equipage, habitted in Scarlet richly laced. Ten Englishmen in Blew Capps and Coats edged with Red, all armed

The President had also "his well-filled stables, for pleasure or service, his chaplains, his physician, surgeons and domestics, his linguist and mint-master".

"At meals he has his trumpets usher in his courses and soft music at the table. If he move out of his chamber, the silver staves wait on him; if downstairs, the guard receives him; if he go abroad, the Bandarines and Moors under two standards march before him." We are told that "he goes sometimes in the coach, drawn by large milk-white oxen, sometimes on horseback, other times in palankeens".

Naturally then, a Presidency, open, as we have seen, to pure merit, evoked aspirations amongst the rank and file of the service similar to that which the Presidency of America is declared by American writers to evoke to-day. But the new Western people have yet to grasp the worth and meaning of ornament and symbols, upon which their own Master Elihu Yale of New England birth might eloquently have descanted.

It was a particularly fortunate thing in some respects for the Company that its chief Governor and

with Blunderbusses, went before his pallankeen, 80 Peons before them, and 4 Musicians playing on the Weights, with 2 Flaggs before like an Agent. A gaudy shew and great noise adds much to a Publick Person's credit in this country. As for Soldyers, they are of absolute necessity here in divers respects and especially whilst we are thus infested with Interlopers to keepe us from publick affronts, as well as overawe our owne people and mariners who are now very numerous and insolent amongst us, and (by reason of Punch) every day give disturbance."—Hedges' *Diary*, vol. i.



ELIHU YALE,

GOVERNOR OF FORT ST. GEORGE, MADRAS (1687-1690).

From a Portrait by Enoch Zeeman, at Yale College, New Haven.

"General"[1] in India was Sir Josiah's own brother. In one of its addresses to Parliament the qualities of "our General in India" are lovingly delineated.

We are told that he "hath lived about thirty-five years in that country without ever seeing his own," and that he "is a person of known sobriety, wisdom, truth and courage, esteemed and beloved by people of all nations in India that have so much ingenuity as to acknowledge virtue in an enemy; something whereof will occur to every man's observation that knows he managed that hazardous war against the Mogul with such success and moderation that he took almost all the Mogul's and subjects' ships sailing in and out of Surat without spilling a drop of their blood, and dismissed the prisoners with clothes and money in their pockets, which gained such a reputation for our nation, even amongst the Moors themselves, that they became universally advocates and solicitors to the Mogul for the Pacification".[2]

Already in the preceding pages has been observed somewhat closely the scope of the Company's trade. We are given by Fryer a convenient bird's-eye view of general operations in his day. "The South Sea trade," he writes, "is still maintained from hence to Bantam with such cloth as is vendible there, from thence with dollars to China for sugar, tea, porcelane, laccared ware, quicksilver, tuthinag and copper; which with cowreys, little sea-shells,

[1] Or Governor-General, as Bruce repeatedly styles him; a title not strictly applicable, however, before 1773, when it was given to Hastings.

[2] The East India Company to Parliament, 1688.

come from Siam and the Philippine Islands; gold and elephants' teeth from Sumatra, in exchange for corn. From Persia, which is still under the Presidency, come drugs and Carmania wool; from Mocha, Cohar or coffee. The inland factories subject to it are Ahmedabad, whence is provided silks, cutlasses wrought with gold; Agra, where they fetch indico, chuperly, course cloth, Siring chints, Broach baftas, broad and narrow; dimities and other fine calicuts. Along the coasts are Bombay, Rajahpore for Salloors; Cornear for dungarees, and the weightiest pepper; Calicut, for spice, ambergreez, granats, opium with saltpetre and no cloth, though it gave the name of Calicut (calico) to all in India, it being the first port from whence they were known to be brought into Europe." All which articles, it is added, "after the Europe ships have unladen at Surat, they go down to fetch; and bring up time enough before the Caffilas out of the country come in with their wares".

From the foregoing, therefore, we may form a sufficient idea of the manner in which the Company's commerce at large was carried on in the East. Owing to the great demand for certain staples, the Company was not content to barter for only the actual and visible supply, but, as in the case of calicoes, sent its factors or the banyans to oversee the weavers buying up the raw cotton and by guaranteeing them employment during the whole season thereby stimulate production. We have seen that from the very first founding of Fort St. George in 1640 some 400 native families of chintz painters,

weavers, etc., had come to settle under the Company's patronage and protection.

In James's reign the Company's factory at Surat was a commodious edifice, rented for a nominal sum from the Governor of Surat.[1] It was built of stone and timber in the Moorish style, plainly carved, with upper and lower galleries, an oratory and a large open room for dining. The President had "spacious lodgings, noble rooms for counsel and entertainments, pleasant tanks, yards and an hummum to wash in". Before Sivaji's onslaught a garden occupied one side of the factory. On the lower floor the goods were stored, and here the commercial transactions took place. In shipping time the scene must have been very animated—"a continual hurly-burly, the Banians presenting themselves from the hour of ten till noon and then afternoon at four till night, as if it were an Exchange in every row". Hither all who had anything to buy or sell resorted clamorously, "for if you make not a noise they hardly think you intent on what you are doing".

We have already noted that the business of a factory was conducted by four chief officers. Each of these controlled a separate department. Through the hands of the accountant, next in dignity to the President, passed the general accounts of all the Company's stations in India, his signature being necessary before any money could be paid out of the treasure chest. The function of the warehouse-keeper was to register all goods bought or sold; and

[1] "Partly the King's gift, partly hired," says Fryer.

next in rank came the marine purser, whose duties embraced the invoices of merchandise, the payment of seamen's wages, the providing of waggons and porters and ships' stores. The secretary drafted the minutes of the Council and the reports to Leadenhall Street, kept the Company's seal, which had to be affixed to all passes and commissions, and duly recorded all the transactions at the factory. No officer, however, could act on his own authority; all had to defer to the President, and obtain his approbation verbally or in writing. The affairs in India were solely under his regulation, and all orders or instructions were void without his signature.

Already we have touched upon the stern sense of discipline inherent in the Company from the first. Nearly all the contemporary accounts by travellers of life at the Company's factories show that they were characterised by orderliness and deference to the President, agent or factor.

The *régime* has been compared to that of an Oxford College.[1] "The youth who stayed out at night or came in after the gate was shut had to pay 40s. (or five weeks salary) to the poor. For absence from prayers the fine was 2s. 6d. on week days and 5s. on Sundays; for an oath, 1s.; for being drunk, and "thereby prostituting the worthiness of our nation and religion to the calumnious censure of the heathen," 2s. 6d.; for striking or abusing persons not in the Company's service, "three days' imprisonment in irons". The factory formed a large

[1] Hunter, *British India.* Calendar of State Papers, 1634, No. 434.

trade-household, in which the President exercised all the authority of the mediæval master-craftsman over the apprentices and men under his roof. The Company itself kept up a "black book" for offenders and a "white book" for faithful services.

At Madras the rules concerning temperance in drink will seem to a less bibulous generation to err something overmuch on the side of liberality. "No one person was to be allowed to drink above half a pint of arrack or brandy and one quart of wine at one time, under a penalty of one pagoda upon the house-keeper that supplied it, and twelve fanams upon every guest that had exceeded that modest allowance."

Yet, although there was considerable commerce with strong liquors, Albert Mandelslo testifies that "at our ordinary meetings every day we took only Thé, which is commonly used all over the Indies, not only among those of the country, but also among the Dutch and English, who take it as a drug that cleanses the stomach and digests the superfluous humours, by a temperate heat particular thereto." He adds that "The Persians instead of Thé drink their Kahwa (coffee), which cools and abates the natural heat which Thé preserves". We may add that in China and India tea is still called Cha.[1]

[1] As the popularity of tea increased we find the Company writing to Surat in 1687 "that very good Thea might be putt up in tutinneague potts, and well and closely packed in chests or boxes, as it will always turn to accompt here now it is made the Compa[s] commodity; whereas, before there were so many sellers of that com̃odity that it would hardly yield half its cost, and some trash Thea from Bantam was forc't to be thrown away or sold for 4d. or 6d. per pound".—*Letter-book*, 7th January, 1687-88.

None of the clerks or writers were permitted to leave bounds after hours. The "heinous offence of getting over the walls of White Town" at Madras entailed the risk of being clapped into irons and sent home to England. Moreover, "all persons swearing, cursing, banning or blaspheming the sacred name of the Almighty God should pay a fine of four fanams for each offence"; duelling was rewarded by imprisonment for two months on rice and water, and so on. What the life actually was in its Eastern service was intimately set forth by one of its own youthful writers in a letter which well deserves a full quotation here.

It appears that the Company had in the year 1668 sent out a printed paper of rules and orders, to which it required "Strickt observance and due compliance," which was therefore called the Company's Commandments, "because there are just ten of them". This paper became publicly affixed in each factory for the information of all the servants. "The Company's commandments," wrote the youth to one of the directors at home, "are good and Pious directions, but there is noe Penalty sett upon the Breach of them except in the greatest offences of open Debauchery and Prophanes, from which there is no hope of amendment in the Party guilty, and then such are by these orders required to be sent for England, as unworthy to reside in a Christian Plantation.

"I say these rules and orders of the Company's not requiring any Penalty for the breach of them, the President and Councill thought fitt to continue

their owne orders which have been many yeares in the Factory, wherein Severe Penalties are required for omission of Prayer and Divine Service and Commission of any Debauchery, and these orders are much more sutable to the place and custome of the Country for the well Government of our People, than the others are. By these he that omitts Prayer on a Weeke day pays 2s. 6d., on a Sunday 5s. If any be Drunke or abuse the Natives they are to be sett at the gate in irons all the day time, and all the night be tyed to a Post in the house. If any lye out of the house, without leave of the President, he pays 40s ; and these Penalties are some of them, allmost as much inflicted, as the offences are Committed, soe that by the Smart thereof and the good example of the President and Councill, here is a most excellent govern'd Factory, indeed more like unto a Colledge, Monasterie, or a house under Religious orders than any other, for we have much more Discourse of Religion, Philosophie, the government of the Passions and affections, and sometimes of history, then of trade and getting money for ourselves, though that allsoe be in noe manner neglected on the Company's behalfe, yet for our owne Particular I believe there is noe Marchants have less regard to it ; and one principall reason for it is because we are providit of things necessary at the Company's charge, and being at small expense, though our Wages be very little, we esteem ourselves Providit for, and the future seems to us as the day of one's Death doth to many, but small provision to be made for it. To return to my Promise, Sr: to give you account of our Re-

ligious acts : we have Prayers every Morning Before the Dores of the Factory are open, and every Night between 8 and 9 a Clock after the Dores are shutt : upon Sundays we have twice in the day Solemn Service and Sermons Read or Preached, and Prayers at Night, this office is performed by the President, and in case of his absence by the chiefe of the Councill or other next in the Factory, if there be noe Minister (or Padre as we call them). If there be a Minister in the Factory then he performs his duty as in Churches in England, Catechizing the Youth on Sunday after evening Service, and administering the Sacrament the 3 great Festivals of the yeare, and sometimes oftener, Burying the Dead, and in these Dutys we are continually exercised, keeping strictly to the Rules of the Church, and soe much as conveniently we can observing the times and days appointed for Feasts and Fasts. For upon the great Feasts of Christmas, Easter and Whitsuntide we have the solemn Service, Publike Feasts, and noe great busynes permitted to be done in the ffactory house, and all the country people know why we are soe Solemn, and Feast, and are merry. Soe allsoe for Gunpowder Treason day, and on the 29th of May for the King's Birth and Returne. And upon the Principall Fasts we have very strickt Fasts kept, noe busyness done in the house, and the Publicke Prayers used upon the occasion, as in Lent, especially upon Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, the 30th of January for Martyrdom of King Charles the First, and some persons there are, of which the President is one, that keeps Weekly Fasts upon every Friday.

Tho' our Fasts here are not as the Romanists and as our Church seem to Direct, abstinence from Flesh and eating of Fish, but a meane dyett, without distinction of meates; nay generally none untill night, but Prayers and retirement.

"I shall not trouble you with more at present, having, I doubt, too much trespassed on you already; if you thinke this discourse may give satisfaction to any of the Company, or Committee, who we hear, and by some passages have reason to believe soe, are of opinion we that live here are men of noe conscience or honesty, bringing noe Religion with us on this side of the Cape, if you thinke it may be satisfactory to them, or others concerned in the Trade, or for their Relations in these parts, I leave it wholly to your selfe to show as your wisdome shall think fitt, reserving such part as Treats of particular concerns, &ca.

"Sr: yours, &ca.

"Bombay, January 18, 1672 (JOHN CHILD?)."

The testimony, says Yule, to outward devotion and regularity in religious observance, on which the foregoing letter (as regards the Company's English servants) chiefly dwells, is certainly surprising. "I should suppose that this was partly due to a survival of the strong Puritan influence of the preceding decades, which had not yet been obliterated by the laxer spirit of the Restoration. Currents of influence carried but slowly then, communicated as they were only by a few ships accomplishing once a year a tedious voyage in comparison with their rapid speed

now, through the swift movement of innumerable passengers and letters, newspapers and electric messages."

Yet in spite of all this human nature was human nature, and men were not appreciably better in tastes, morals or ideals at Fort St. George than they were in St. James's or St. Giles's.

It was all very well to seek to regulate as studiously the religion, morals and behaviour of the Eastern clerks and writers as if these pursued their tasks in Leadenhall Street instead of at Surat, Bombay and Madras. Of course, such a high standard of conduct at the factories in India was impossible. Black sheep were bound to pervade the fold; nor were some of the reckless and profane spirits the worse traders on that account, although, being less amenable to discipline, they gradually, as the practice of interloping grew, became weeded out, and found in the risks of private trade a more congenial atmosphere.

From its very inception the Company was distinguished for its piety,[1] and not only sent out chaplains to its chief settlements,[2] but also from

[1] The Company celebrated the departure and the return of its ships by a solemn service and a special sermon. In 1634, long before the reign of the saints, men declared on the Exchange that in the guidance of their affairs they saw "the finger of God". The General Court sometimes opened its proceedings with thanks to the Almighty for the safe arrival of vessels, and it was at least on one occasion called together chiefly for that purpose.—Hunter's *British India*, vol. ii., p. 153.

[2] "Chaplains," says Hunter, "were chosen with care, the Company assigning a text to the clerical candidates and attending in a body to hear them preach on it."—*Ibid.*, p. 154 *n.*

time to time a supply of theological literature calculated to improve the mind and exercise a cooling effect on dispositions susceptible to a tropical sun. In 1667 it sent out a new schoolmaster, Mr. Ralph Orde, with a liberal salary and appointments, telling its agents that "he is to teach all the children to read English, and to write and cipher, gratis; and if any of the other nations, as Portuguese, Gentoos, or others, will send their children to school, we require that they be also taught gratis, and you are to appoint some convenient place for this use; and he is likewise to instruct them in the principles of the Protestant religion; *and he is to diet at our table.*"[1] In the same letter the Madras agents were told that they might give two rupees apiece to such as should be able to repeat the catechism by heart, "for their encouragement".

Elsewhere has been observed that by far the greatest and most impressive fact in the Company's service, greater and more impressive than trade and profits, wealth and honours, although a fact constantly disregarded in the temerity and pride of youth, was the awful omnipresence of death. Stupendous as the price was, cheerfully was it paid. Not even the huge bills of mortality which were published by report from time to time had power to restrain men from daring in the East the perils of disease and pestilence.

[1] The Company in one instance objected to Mr. Sturdivant, nominated by Dr. Layfield, because it was reported "he hath a straggling humour, can frame himself to all company as he finds men affected, and delighteth in tobacco and wine". No man this for the pious merchant adventurers!

"We are here," wrote Fryer, "but as exotic plants . . . not agreeable to the soil. For in five hundred, one hundred survives not; of that one hundred, one quarter get not estates; of those that do it has not been recorded above one in ten years has seen his country."

As the modern Anglo-Indian poet has sung:—

We were dreamers, dreaming greatly, in the man-stifled town;
We yearned beyond the sky-line where the strange roads go down.

. . . .

Follow after, follow after! We have watered the root,
And the bud has come to blossom that ripens for fruit.

CHAPTER XIV.

Sir Josiah overrides Tribulation.

In the fatal year of the Monmouth rising, the Bloody Circuit and the Edict of Nantes, the East India Company resolved upon a bold step, impelled by the worthlessness of imperial firmans in the case of its factories in Bengal. Although its servants had, with much trouble and expense, obtained Aurangzeb's written permission to trade at Hugli, yet the oppression and insults of the local governor soon rendered that trade all but worthless; the ships sailed from Hugli to Madras with empty holds. The alternative, then, was flight or fight. The Dutch had a Bengal factory, so had the French; but both, more prudently, had established these at the mouth of the Hugli river, instead of going up country into the very jaws of a Mogul garrison, as the Company's servants had done. If the Company retreated, its business would fall wholly, perhaps permanently, to its rivals.

The directors long canvassed the matter. At last, at a memorable meeting held in London, 14th January, 1686, they resolved not to retreat; they would measure swords with the "infidels of Northern India," who, in the opinion of the servants in the East, "have been trampling upon us and extorting what they please of our estate from us by the be-

sieging of our Factorys and stopping of our boats upon the Ganges". There was only one argument to use: "They will never forbare doing so till we have made them as sensible of our Power as we have of our Truth and Justice". This signified an appeal to the sword—perhaps hostilities against the whole Mogul Empire; but John Child had approved it, and the Court were now "after many deliberations firmly of the same opinion and resolve with God's blessing to pursue it".[1] An expedition, consisting of ten ships of from seventy to twelve guns each, was fitted out in England against the offending Nawab of Bengal.

This expedition, which had the warm approval of the royal shareholder, James,[2] was temporarily commanded by Captain Nicholson, until it reached the Ganges, when the Company's Bengal agent, Job Charnock, was to take command both as admiral and commander-in-chief. On board this fleet were embarked six full companies of infantry, but with no officers save lieutenants, it being intended that the members of the Bengal Council, to whose fiery protestations the whole enterprise was due, should act as the necessary colonels, majors and captains. The force was to be joined by a company from Priaman, by a detachment from Madras and by the seamen from the fleet, altogether to form an effective regiment of ten companies or 1,000 men. As for the

[1] Letter from the Secret Committee.—Hedges' *Diary*.

[2] James was a leading adventurer, "indeed," says Hunter, "his Majesty's Indian stock proved one of his most valuable assets at St. Germains three years later".

fleet, reinforced by the Company's other ships, its total would reach nineteen sail.

It was with this insignificant land force that the East India Company proposed to chastise the aged and insolent Shaista Khan, Nawab of Bengal, with his army of 40,000 soldiers. Still more insignificant it was destined to be by the time it reached the scene of conflict, where, high up the Ganges, hemmed in by his dusky enemies, perhaps the bravest and most tenacious of all the Company's servants in India lay awaiting this succour from home.

When Nicholson's force finally entered the Hugli, to strengthen the factory garrison, it had dwindled to no more than 300 soldiers. With this army Charnock was expected to begin his campaign against the offending Nawab. It was perhaps lucky that the high-spirited declaration of war which had been prepared in Leadenhall Street never came to the eyes or ears of Shaista Khan or he might have done something more than merely "surround" the Hugli factory with a few hundred horse and three or four thousand foot. On 28th October, 1686, the collision came. A trio of Company's soldiers were set upon in the bazaar by the natives. In the subsequent sharp and bloody conflict Charnock was overwhelmingly victorious, but his position, cut off by a hundred miles from his fleet at the river's mouth, was too dangerous to be kept. He therefore temporised with the local Hugli governor, shipped the Company's servants and merchandise on board his light river craft and made his way down stream

to the bleak and repellant mud bank whereon stands to-day Calcutta, capital of all India. In Charnock's eyes the place seemed capable of being rendered impregnable, and at the beginning of 1687 he constructed a number of huts of refuge and was in hopes of building a factory. But the Nawab's men, following the luckless English while they were still in an unprepared state, drove them far away down the mouth of the river. Here, later in the year, they bore the brunt of an attack by Shaista Khan's army and drove them off. But by that time starvation, disease and artillery had claimed 200 of the gallant little band, while 100 others lay on the earth unable to bear arms. Charnock, one lieutenant and four sergeants were all that remained of forty officers. Not even the reinforcement of seventy men from Madras, which arrived at a critical juncture, could have helped him much; only by exaggerating this force in the eyes of the Nabob's commander was a truce obtained. The worn-out garrison capitulated on 11th June, and, after further errant adventures, Charnock in the autumn once more brought his remnant to the desolate site of Calcutta. Here he laboured to make a kind of earthwork defence and shelter for his men, until a Company's harsh mandate, penned in the unenlightened atmosphere of the London board-room, interrupted him at his task and in the end brought him and his fevered and scurvy-stricken followers back to an intolerable refuge at Madras.

The conduct of Charnock and his Council was blamed by the Court as having been "dilatory in the extreme, which had been the true cause of his

having been obliged to accept of terms from the Nabob and from the Mogul, which neither coincided with the intentions of the Court when they sent out the armaments, nor placed the trade in a better situation ".

This brings us to February, 1689. Leaving for a moment the lion-hearted Charnock to fret and fume in impotence and neglect at Madras for fifteen months, we will make our way back to see what is happening at Bombay.

Although war had been decided upon nominally against the Mogul in Bengal and the East, it was not considered necessary for President Child and the others actually to assume an offensive attitude towards Aurangzeb in the West. The Company seemed to think that peaceful trading might actually continue at Surat and Bombay, while Charnock and the Bengal Viceroy were shedding each other's blood by the banks of the Ganges. Nevertheless, Sir John Child expressed his intention to avoid hostilities until he could at least receive intelligence of the events attending the expedition in Bengal, but should fighting be forced on him, " by reason of the Mogul's getting wind " of the Company's doings and attitude in the East, he would undoubtedly fight. Meanwhile, he thought it highly advisable to cultivate the friendship of the Mogul's arch-enemy, Sivaji, and even supply him with ammunition, because he considered such friendship politically and commercially desirable. He wrote home to the Company that if hostilities broke out he would not unduly expose the English troops, but " would rather

employ the topasses (*i.e.*, Portuguese half-castes) which they could easily engage at Surat, from having a good opinion of their fidelity."

Child continued for a whole year in some hazard at Surat, but finally on 2nd May, 1687, quitted Surat for Bombay, leaving his lieutenant, Harris, in charge. From Bombay he proceeded to assume the aggressive, and despatched two of the Company's largest ships to the Red Sea and two others to China with secret orders to seize all Mogul or Siamese vessels they came across. At the same time he thought it prudent to provide for the safety of Harris and the others at Surat, together with the Company's property there, and for this purpose sent a ship to bring them off. But, by the time the ship arrived, the native Governor of Surat became aware of the plot and refused to permit Harris to leave. Another armed vessel was sent to seize on Mogul shipping as hostages for the imprisoned factor's safety.

In this situation, a new Governor, Muchtar Khan, was appointed to Surat, who ostentatiously professed a friendship for the English and a strong desire to negotiate with Sir John Child. Deceived by these professions and not suspecting bad faith, Child repaired to the former seat of the Company's Indian trade (now superseded by Bombay) and negotiated what appeared to be a favourable treaty with Muchtar Khan, granting all the privileges the Company sought. Delighted with this excellent stroke of business, Child reported the transaction to the Company, who instantly responded by a vote of thanks, accompanied by an order for a thousand

guineas as a mark of its esteem. But by the time this gift arrived Child was undeceived. The aim of the new Governor of Surat had been merely to gain time; he soon threw off the mask of amity, laid hold of Harris and other servants, confiscated the Company's goods, and offered a large reward for the person of Sir John Child, alive or dead.

To increase Child's embarrassment the Mogul's army had overrun and conquered Golconda and Bijapur. Sivaji was slain and the President of Madras was making overtures for peace. In vain did Child protest to the Mogul that his intentions towards the person and authority of the latter were quite without animosity, which was only directed towards Aurangzeb's enemies. The Mogul's ire was roused, his fleets collected and Bombay was placed on the defensive. Here, from the defection and want of *esprit de corps* of the European soldiery, things were going from bad to worse, when, on the 4th February, 1690, Sir John Child, in the midst of his worries, died, and the Governor-Generalship of British India virtually devolved upon Harris, then a prisoner in irons at Surat.

Previous to his death Child had despatched a couple of trusted servants to the Mogul's camp at Bijapur to endeavour to negotiate a treaty of peace, and in consequence of advices received from these commissioners John Vaux, the Deputy-Governor of Bombay, went out to receive formally the expected firman from Aurangzeb.[1] It

[1] Harris reported that the intentions of the Mogul towards the English appeared more conciliatory; for, at the close of the season,

duly arrived and the Company's servants were liberated.

But when it came to be examined the vaunted firman was found to be merely the pardon a prince extends to a disreputable criminal, whom out of his good nature he liberates on the payment of a heavy fine and the promise of good behaviour. Thus ran this notable firman of the Mogul in the height of his triumph and insolence: "All the English having made a most submissive petition that the crimes they have done may be pardoned, and requested another firman to make their being forgiven manifest, and sent their vakkeels to the heavenly palace, the most illustrious in the world, to get the royal favour: and Ettimaud Caun, the Governor of Surat's petition to the famous court equal to the skie, being arrived, that they would present the great King with 150,000 rupees, to his most noble treasury, resembling the sun, and would restore the merchants goods that they had taken away, to the owners of them, and would walk by the ancient customs of the port, and behave themselves for the future no more in such a shameful manner, therefore his Majesty according to his duly favour to all the people of the world hath pardoned their faults, mercifully forgiven them, and out of his princely condescension agrees that the present be put into the treasury of the port, the merchants goods be returned, the town flourish and they follow their trade, as in former times, and

he had agreed to pay 80,000 rupees as compensation for the goods plundered from the English factory, and it was understood a more favourable firman had been procured for the Bengal trade.

Mr. Child, who did the disgrace, be turned out and expelled. This order is irreversible."[1]

It was dated 27th February, 1690, before tidings of Child's death had reached Bijapur. When it was being read by the stupefied Vaux and Harris at Surat, the irrepressible Siddi's fleet and army had invaded Bombay and besieged the Deputy-Governor and his garrison.

Under these circumstances there was nothing left to the Company's distracted servants but to comply with the Mogul's humiliating demands in order to save their factors and trade on the west coast. So suddenly were Child's calculations upset!

Although the Mogul did not lay siege to Madras, he issued orders to expel all the English from his dominions. Thereupon the factory at Vizagapatam was surprised and seized, the agent Stables and four factors slain and the Company's property confiscated. The English factory at Masulipatam was in like manner secured, although the local governor, being friendly to the Company, held out hopes of its restitution. The conquest of Golconda had caused the weavers to fly hither for shelter and so at present there was no silk being manufactured in the province.

Besides these staggering and unexpected evils to trade, there arose others unfavourable to the Company. In 1689 the French began to fortify Pondicherry and for the first time to show a hostile spirit towards the English. A fleet of piratical vessels, of considerable force, under English colours,

[1] See translation in Stewart's *History of Bengal*.

appeared in Eastern waters. One of them of twenty-two guns captured a valuable vessel belonging to Madras, loaded however with goods chiefly belonging to the President. Five others threatened ships off Achin. Interloping equipments sprang up on all sides.

Harassed and straitened thus in India, in England the Company's fortunes were not less in jeopardy. While its Bombay President was still sanguine, its situation at home was giving rise to deep anxiety for reasons concerning the nation at large.

Early in 1688 it became evident that King James's incurable Popery would precipitate revolt amongst his Protestant subjects. When the first intelligence came of the arming of the Prince of Orange with a view to a friendly invasion of England, the Company was not unnaturally alarmed. But it yielded outwardly no sign of perturbation; nor did it give any indication of its opinions in its letters to the East. The expedition was not an act of the States-General, but was at the sole charge of the Prince. The first effect, so far as the Company was concerned, was to prevent the equipments for India from being fitted out, the impress of men for the King's service being so general. Even after William and his army had landed at Dartmouth on the 4th November, and King James had sent Lords Halifax, Nottingham and Godolphin to treat with him, and by proclamation summoned a Parliament, the Company observed the same caution—"divided between their ancient allegiance, the general expectation of reforming the Government, and the

hope of reconciliation between the King and the Prince ".[1]

Event followed event in quick succession. James was overthrown and fled to France, but his fellow-members of the Company still gave no sign. Albeit they directed Child (who then lay dead at Bombay), should he have made peace with the Mogul, to try and get possession of the island of Salsette, "there being under the new government of England no fear of any intrigues with the Jesuits, or popish priests, to obstruct his retaining it ". Two days after William and Mary were proclaimed King and Queen of England (13th February, 1689), the prudent Company despatched a special ship, the *Chandos*, to bear copies of the proclamation to Bombay, Madras and Bengal, ordering them to be published with due solemnity, not only at those places, but at all their factories in India.

Already the Company, so intimately bound up with the Tories, was quick to foresee one inevitable result of the Revolution, so far as the Indian trade was concerned. That it would be a signal for interloping on a large scale went without saying. It might even be a signal for an assault on those exclusive privileges granted by the first and confirmed by the second James.

"The interlopers and other maligners," wrote the Company,[2] "are very busy, and pretend great matters they will do shortly by complaints of the Company's management, a lightness and vanity

[1] Bruce's *Annals*, vol. ii.

[2] Letter to Madras, 15th February, 1688-89.

which they have always abounded in, especially upon every change of the Government, or lesser change of Ministers of State or favourites; but their boastings have always come to nought, and so they will now, all Governments being wiser than to be persuaded by such irregular and disorderly vain men, though they may sometimes seem to give them a little ear and countenance, for reasons not to be mentioned, as also for the enlargement of their own understanding, in so abstruse an affaire as y[t] of the East Indies is, to noblemen and gentlemen y[t] have not been conversant in busyness of that nature. We hint this to you to prevent you or any of our other servants being deceived or perverted, by such advices as may be writt by discontented men, as some windy heads of our servants in India have been often already to their own as well as our detriment; yet such is the folly of some unstable minds that are uneasy under a steady righteous government that though they have been frequently frustrated of their expectations, they are capable of being deceived againe, by the self-same methods as they have often been deceived with already; which caution we give you, for your own sakes, more than for the Companyes."

At this time, too, the Company, ignorant of disaster in India, declared prophetically that:—

"The increase of our revenue is the subject of our care as much as our trade; 'tis that that must maintain our force, when twenty accidents may interrupt our trade; 'tis that that must make us *a nation in India*, without that we are but a great

number of interlopers, united by His Majesty's royal Charter, fit only to trade where no body of power thinks it their interest to prevent us."

In India the news of the Revolution came upon the Company's reeling servants like a bolt from the blue. They had each and all long considered the royal protection to be their wrought-armour defence against interlopers, private traders and pirates. The first rumours of James's ruin smote them with dismay. The Revolution was a Dutch plot; a base insidious project to destroy competition in India.

The failure of any ships or stocks to arrive confirmed them in their dejection, and was no doubt contributory to the death of Sir John Child. Little wonder, when the rumour ran that advices had been received by a Dutch ship from Batavia that the Prince of Orange had "landed with a large army and had made a conquest of England,"[1] the terrible news "threw them all into despair"—as well it might. In this state the English at Bombay and Surat continued throughout the whole of that year. Not until June, 1690, did tidings of a reassuring character reach them. Madras had been more fortunate, owing to its freedom from the unwelcome surveillance of the Mogul's fleet and armies. The very day on which William and Mary were proclaimed in Bombay was marked by the Siddi's withdrawal under the terms of the Mogul's humiliating firman.

The reception this firman would have in Eng-

[1] Letter from Surat, 7th June, 1689.

land must have been anticipated. In vain did Sir Josiah Child, by a misleading announcement in the *London Gazette*,[1] endeavour to forestall adverse public opinion. The Company's enemies had obtained a truer copy of the edict, and hastily printing a translation, scattered it broadcast throughout the town. The terms of this miserable treaty of peace between the Company and the Mogul were loudly declared to be a disgrace to the English name.

Enemies now sprang out from their lurking-places; an organised effort was made to annul the privileges and destroy the power of the Company or "the Tory Child and his monopoly".

In truth, events ever since the downfall of James had been shaping to the Company's disadvantage. Child's dominion over its affairs, legends concerning his tyranny and arrogance, his alleged time-serving to the Stuarts, his bribes, became current, and so influenced and inflamed public opinion.[2] In many parts of the country the whole Eastern trade was roundly denounced. The English character was being ruined; honest English looms were idle, by reason of Indian silks and shawls; "where were now the brave old hangings of Arras, which had adorned the walls of lordly mansions in the time of

[1] 11th May, 1691.

[2] In a tract published in 1690: *Reasons humbly offered against grafting or splicing; and for dissolving the present East India Company*: the latter is denounced as having been "founded and planted in a direct opposition to the native liberty of the subject; cultivated, cherished and influenced by the hand of tyranny and arbitrary powers; watered with the tears, groans and estates of the subjects of England; and grown up to an unbounded despotic power."

Elizabeth? And was it not a shame to see a gentleman whose ancestors had worn nothing but stuffs made by English workmen out of English fleeces, flaunting in a calico shirt and a pair of silk stockings from Moorshedebad?"[1]

These patriots would gladly have seen the whole Indian trade abolished or confined to spices and saltpetre. But such views were in the minority; they were not those of the more active opponents of the Company. These not only believed in the Oriental commerce, but exaggerated its value and importance. They boldly declared that it comprised half of the whole trade of the kingdom. The chief grievance of these persons seems to have been not that such trade was carried on by a single joint stock corporation, but that they were excluded from membership. They charged that it was not merely a close body,[2] but that it was composed of but a handful of merchants; that as the price of the stock advanced, the numbers of its holders diminished. They charged that five persons owned a sixth part, and fourteen persons a third part of the entire

[1] Macaulay's *History of England*, vol. iv.

[2] The Company plausibly denied that it was a close corporation. "If this Company be pulled down or (as the phrase now in vogue) the Doors set open for new subscriptions, what reasonable compensation can be made for the dead stock, the forts, factories, arms, ammunition, Phirmaunds and privileges acquired, improved, recovered and maintained by a vast expense? and with what equity can this be done without it? Whereas the daily practice of buying stock at price-current is so easie to any who have a mind to come in fairly, so many dying or selling off to lay out in lands." From a tract in the British Museum signed "WILLIAM LANGHORNE. 1690."

organisation. Several stock-holders derived an income of £10,000 a year from the business, and one at least £20,000. Such fortunes had never before been paralleled in the City. Nor could his former Whig friends forgive Child for his change of principles and the dazzling favour which had been shown him by Charles and James. They taunted him with servility and sycophancy, and in the front ranks of these assailants stood Child's former friend and fellow-director, Thomas Papillon.

No time was lost by the malcontents, while the public mind continued agitated in pressing upon Parliament the crying evil of the existing Indian trade. A Committee was appointed before which the proposition of the interlopers and the defence of the Company were fully heard, and on the 16th January, 1690, it was resolved "that it is the opinion of this committee that the best way to manage the East India trade is to have it in a new company and a new joint stock, and this to be established by Act of Parliament; but the present Company to continue the trade exclusive of all others, either interlopers or Permission ships, till it be established".

Again aware that the privileges it had hitherto enjoyed under Royal charters could not in future be exclusively relied upon, the Company prepared to yield to altered circumstances, and to apply for an Act of Parliament for confirmation of its privileges. At the same time the opposing faction, on the strength of the Committee's resolution, raised £180,000 for a new East India Company. But at

this juncture Parliament was dissolved and a new House summoned, which temporarily put an end to legislative proceedings.

But, although they had not yet succeeded in their design, Papillon and his friends were already, in popular parlance, the New Company, and we are told that "the hostilities between the New Company and the Old Company soon caused almost as much excitement and anxiety, at least in that busy hive of which the Royal Exchange was the centre, as the hostilities between the Allies and the French King".[1]

The New Company met in the stately hall of the Skinners' Company in Dowgate, and thenceforward Dowgate and Leadenhall Street became synonyms for the rival parties. Between the two recriminations raged; charge was replied to by counter-charge; and in this war of broadsides, epistles and pamphlets all the town took sides. The old Company was composed of "rascals" and "traitors"; the members of the new Company were "pirates" and "thieves". The former was made up chiefly of Tories, the latter of Whigs. The dramatist, Rowe, in one of his plays[2] exhibits an old gentleman crying out to his daughter: "Thou hast been bred up like a virtuous and sober maiden, and wouldest thou take the part of a profane wretch who sold his stock out of the old East India Company?"

Yet of the two the new body enjoyed the most popularity; for the simple reason that it had done

[1] Macaulay's *History of England*. [2] *The Biter*.

nothing, offended no one, promised everything and praised every one; but it was obvious that the old Company possessed the most power. It was no longer, it is true, what it had been in 1685: the events in India had borne heavily upon its dividends; but its stock was still far above par, its organisation was excellent, and, above all, Sir Josiah Child, as capable, as resolute, and, perhaps, if his enemies were to be credited, as unscrupulous as ever, still sat at the head of the Council Board.

To Child has been credited the doubtful honour of being the first English stock-jobber. East India Company stock having become a regular commodity in the market, speculation in its sale and purchase was inevitable. Thus, it was the interest of the buyers to depress its value, as it was the contrary interest of the sellers to enhance it. Child had his brokers under his immediate orders and "practised to perfection some of the least creditable devices of the modern Stock Exchange". For example, if Sir Josiah wished to buy shares one clique would look sour, shake their heads, suggest bad news from India, and intimate delicately that their principal wished to get rid of a parcel of shares. This was enough for the timid holders, who hurried to Change Alley in a fright to dispose of their shares for what they would fetch. Of course, another clique of brokers was on hand to purchase, and in this way, according to our authority, "by selling £10,000 stock at 4 or 5 per cent. loss he would buy £100,000 at 10 or 12 per cent. under price; and in a few weeks, by just the contrary method, set them all

a buying, and then sell them their own stock again at 10 or 12 per cent. profit".[1]

Parliament, in October, 1691, met and resolved that the East India trade was beneficial to the nation and would best be carried on by a joint stock monopoly. After a long and heated debate, as to which of the contending bodies should receive its favour, it was further resolved that the capital should be raised to a million and a half, but, at the same time, in order to do away with "autocrats" and "cabals," to limit the share of any single proprietor to £5,000. If any member held more than was represented by this sum he was to dispose of it at any price not below par. Such an arrangement was, of course, directly aimed at Child. The whole plan would have retained the old Company, it is true, but the infusion of the Dowgate men would have completely swamped it. Besides, the Company was to be compelled by law to furnish annually 500 tons of saltpetre to the Crown at a fixed minimum price, and obliged to export £200,000 worth of English manufactures per annum.

Very quickly and in very proper terms did Child and his fellow "committees" reply to these proposals. They absolutely refused to accept them and proceeded to expose the fallacies on which they were founded.

As the Company could not be got to accept the terms, the Commons suffered the Bill embodying them to drop after a second reading. But vexed by

[1] *The Anatomy of Exchange Alley*, by A Jobber, 1719.

its refusal in February, 1692, they presented an address to King William praying for the dissolution of the Company and the grant of a charter to a new Company "on such terms as to His Majesty's wisdom might see fit". From this the inference is clear that the Commons did not doubt the King's constitutional prerogative embraced the issuance of a mandate of monopoly.[1]

Such was the situation throughout 1692, and matters being no worse the astute and cynical Sir Josiah easily plucked up courage again. Child's severest blow had been the death of his brother, from whom he had hoped so much. His business was now with the King and Court, and a long experience told him that Courts and monarchs are singularly amenable to reasons of a peculiar and tangible kind. William himself might be an exception; but William's hands were full of foreign affairs, especially the war with France, and the Company's business would likely be delegated to men of a less austere and impeccable cast of character. If, then, as has been said, "the chief weapons of the New Company were libels, the chief weapons of the Old Company were bribes".[2]

[1] When Parliament referred the dispute to King William, we find the old Company granting commissions to its captains to seize interlopers, describing these latter as "malcontents, quondam committee-men and adventurers, who have sold their stock at high rates and want to buy in again at low".—Letter to Fort St. George, 29th Feb., 1692.

[2] Child at this time (July, 1692) expressed his satisfaction and his confidence at the outlook. "I believe in my conscience there will be no change of the Company while I live, or, if any, no other than like the change of the moon . . . the same good old Company

An answer came from the King far sooner than the Company expected. In November, 1692, His Majesty told the Commons that he had considered the matter with his advisers, and found it quite impracticable to dissolve the Company as they desired without three years' notice. He, therefore, again suggested that the first proposal be adopted and the Company's capital (valued at £740,000) raised to £2,000,000 to admit the malcontents. But again Child spurned such a compromise, and the offended Commons prayed the King to give the Company the required three years' notice, which request William promised to consider.

Child was quick to see that such consideration would necessarily be precarious and devolve on certain of his Ministers, because the King left England almost immediately for the French wars. But the crisis in the Company's affairs was now come. In addition to the centripetal forces pressing heavily upon it, the Company had lately incurred a fresh risk. A tax had been imposed by the Parliament on the stock of the three great trading companies; the time limit for its payment expired on the day following William's departure for Holland, and default meant nothing less than the forfeiture of its charter.[1] The predicament was grave; if the charter were not renewed before the reassem-

again, which will serve more of the ends of our furious brain-sick adversaries."—Rawlinson MS. The prediction testifies to Child's acuteness.

[1] Hunter thinks it was "An act of negligence so extraordinary as to suggest design," and that Child "used the default to secure a new Royal Charter".—See *Hist. of British India*, vol. ii., p. 310.

bling of Parliament, all was lost. Child had already laid his plans ; his machinery was in readiness ; but recognising his unpopularity he prudently retired into the background in favour of his trusty kinsman, Sir Thomas Cooke. Cooke, a member of Parliament and a wealthy merchant, has been characterised as the "submissive creature of Child," and acted throughout under Child's direction. But Cooke had ability of his own, and thoroughly understood the political morality of the day. At least £80,000 was lavished upon the Royal entourage, upon Privy Councillors, Lords and Commoners, upon officers of State, governors and secretaries, even valets and doorkeepers were not forgotten.[1] The result was

[1] The Company neglected no precaution to enlist public favour. I have come across a curious broadside of this year, which must even then have made the judicious smile. It is addressed :—

"*To the Honourable the House of Commons, assembled in Parliament.*

"The humble petition of above One Thousand Sea-mens Widdows besides their Fatherless children : and some hundreds of blind and lame : who are relieved by the Right Honourable the East India Company, Present &c. Humbly shewth

"That your poor Petitioners, Real objects of Charity, in all Humility, beg your Honours Pardons, for humbly presuming to Appeal to your Honours in hopes Charity and Compassion will induce this Honourable House to consider the Sorrows and Sufferings your poor, destitute, Deplorable and Helpless Petitioners must unavoidably be reduced and involved in, if the above said Company be Supprest or put down : whose Charity is constant in a Liberal manner, Extended to our great Succours and Relief. Therefore, most Prostradedly beg your Honours Mercifully to give Ear to cryes and Petitions : and use your Honourable Endeavours to continue the above said Company : whereby we may be supported according to our several Necessitous Wants as heretofore.

"And as in duty bound, your Poor Petitioners shall Fervently

what might have been expected ; a new charter was ordered to be drawn up for the Company.

But, in the face of popular opposition and prejudice, it would have been in the last degree unwise for the Ministers to have issued a charter unconditionally. Conditions therefore were imposed which the Company would have rejected two years before, but was glad enough now to accept. The charter ran for only twenty-one years, it provided for a new subscription of £744,000 to be added to the Company's capital, and it restricted any member from holding more than £10,000 of stock, or of having more than ten votes.

But although these new terms did not materially differ from the old ones which the Commons had previously urged, yet so inflamed had grown public opinion, and so much the more angry were the baulked merchants in Dowgate, that a cry of discontent speedily arose. The Company's enemies and would-be rivals loudly protested against the granting of a monopoly. They questioned the King's right to grant a monopoly: "No monopoly can be created but by Act of Parliament". They hurried this plea, which they had not dared to use before, into the Privy Council. Over the Privy Council presided Caermarthen, and in his strong box had just been

and Unfeignedly in a Thankful manner, Ever pray for your Honours, &c.

Margaret Walker.
Mary Williams.
Ann Carew.

"Besides above a Thousand others whose Names will be given in if desired." Näive—perhaps not altogether credible—pleaders these—Mesdames Walker, Williams and Carew!

poured thousands of the Company's guineas. Caermarthen gratefully pronounced in favour of the Company, and in October the great seal was affixed to the new charter.

Great were the rejoicings in Leadenhall Street; and in the flush of triumph Child and his fellow-directors forgot their prudence. They had never shown much mercy to interlopers, but until now they had been content to restrict the application of their policy of Thorough to the waters of the East. The persecutions with which the Company visited all who attempted to interfere with this monopoly had taken place on the other side of the globe in alien and infidel seas and seaports, where English law and English customs were unknown. Hitherto when the Company had a grievance against interlopers at home it had sued them in the English courts: it had not dared to seize their property in the Thames. But now such prudent moderation was flung to the winds. The Company resolved to flaunt its power in the very face of the English people. A ship, the *Redbridge*, equipped by a number of merchants, was lying in the Thames, apparently bound for Alicante. But from a knowledge of her owners and outfitters the Company shrewdly suspected her real destination to be India. This suspicion was enough to urge them to procure an order of detention from the Privy Council. The order was enforced by the Admiralty, and instantly the City blazed up with excitement and indignation. Petitions poured in upon Parliament, and a committee was appointed to consider them; of this committee Papillon was made chairman.

"If," said the Company in its defence, "our monopoly is legal, this detention of an interloping ship is legal also." When Gilbert Heathcote, the chief owner of the *Redbridge*, appeared to give his testimony, he boldly averred that the vessel had been equipped for the Eastern trade. "He did not," he said, "think it any sin to trade to the East Indies, and would trade thither till there was an Act of Parliament to the contrary." This sentiment was received with general applause; the detention of the *Redbridge* was pronounced illegal by the committee, and on 19th January their opinion was confirmed by the House of Commons, which, without taking a division, resolved that "all subjects of England had equal right to trade to India and the East unless prohibited by Act of Parliament".

Such a decision was of far-reaching import; it struck not only at the Company's monopoly, but at the Royal right thenceforward to grant charters to any person or corporation for exclusive trade. But having enunciated the principle the House did not seem anxious to follow it up by any act of offence to William. Those who had expected that the Company's challenge of legality would be accepted, that it would be dissolved and a new body set up in its stead, were mistaken. No such step was taken. The Company had still power and influence enough to keep its hold on its own charter, with the clauses against licensed traders stricken out, and to prevent its rivals from being granted any similar instrument. Thus, trade to India was now in theory free to all subjects; but the private adventurer who found him-

self at any of the Company's ports in the East, or who even met with a Company's ship on the high seas, or a Company's servant far inland, found it in practice as much a monopoly as ever.

By the terms of the new charter granted by the King the Company entered into an obligation to export in its ships each season English manufactures to the value of £150,000, and thereby remove one of the chief complaints directed against it by its provincial opponents. To carry out this clause, early in 1694 it decided to send £50,000 worth of English cloth to Persia, and thereafter to push the cloth trade in Persia to the fullest extent possible, hopefully anticipating that the returns would be made in Persian silks, and so enable it to undersell its opponents of the Turkey Company in the home market. The establishment in the Shah's dominions was at the same time augmented, a chief, four factors and four writers were appointed; the factories at Gombroon and Ispahan were made permanent. In order that the Company's Persian servants might be qualified to take charge of subordinate duties the writers were instructed to "reside in the houses of Armenians, to study their language and acquire their method of conducting business". At that time the Armenians had in their hands the chief trade of Persia. As merchants and money changers they filled the place in this kingdom and in Turkey filled in Christendom by the Jews.[1] The Shah had offered them the

[1] When the Company invited the Armenians to settle in Madras in 1692 we learn that the quarter set apart for them is to be called Julpha, "that being the town from which Shah Abbas the Great had brought

whole of the silk product of Persia; it was, therefore, inevitable that the Company's dealings should be with this sect. But the Armenians had long had intimate relations with the Turkey Company; it was equally inevitable that in any rivalry between the two masters, one of the sea-borne and the other of the land-borne commerce, the latter would be favoured. And the Company had yet to learn a lesson. The whole of the English cloth was by its orders consigned to the principal Armenians at Julpha. It so happened, also, that in 1693 the whole of the cloth investment sent by the Turkey Company for Persia, *viâ* Aleppo, had been captured by the French. This circumstance seemed to authorise an increase in the price of English cloth. It might also if taken advantage of divert the long-established course of the silk trade between Persia and Aleppo and make Gombroon the centre instead. We shall soon see whether or not these roseate expectations came to be fulfilled.

Meanwhile any regular trade with China was slow in developing from the repeated hindrances put upon it. The London dame who affected a passion for tea, fans, porcelain and any other products of the Flowery Kingdom was forced to patronise, albeit indirectly, the Dutch merchants. From Amsterdam came the bulk of the rice, oranges,

them when he conquered Armenia and settled them in a suburb in his newly-made metropolitan city Ispaham, and called the quarter he allotted there to the Armenians *Julpha*, by the name of the city from whence he brought them, and they are increased there to be the richest people and the most expert merchants we know of in the Universe."—*Letter-book*, 29th February, 1692.

tea and spices consumed by Europe. The Company's efforts to participate in the China trade were intermittent. In 1694 they sent one ship to Amoy, and among the instructions given to the *Dorothy's* supercargo we find a list of china articles which were held to be suited to the English market of the period, such as "Nankin, silks, damasks, satins, velvets (plain, flowered and embroidered), gold-thread, raw silks, China and lacquered ware, a good quantity of fine tea, and some fans and screens".

Upon the general conduct of the Company's Indian trade the recent disastrous events, added to what had been happening in India, could not but exercise important effects which were manywhere visible. Sir John Child's death, the Siddi's late occupation and the plague had paralysed Bombay. Only thirty-five English soldiers survived in the fort. The Jesuits there had been exerting their utmost to stir up discontent. President Harris at Surat, suffering from the baneful influence of the Mogul's firman, was fighting hard, and not unsuccessfully, for trade. We have seen that he even prevailed on the Mogul to pay 80,000 rupees by way of compensation for the goods plundered from the Surat factory, in itself seeming evidence that matters were improving.

But suddenly the west coast received a visit from a hostile French fleet, sent purposely from Europe to inflict damage upon the Company's shipping. In October, 1692, the *Elizabeth* was captured within fifty leagues of Bombay, after a plucky resistance. With this prize as the basis of

their undertaking, the French proposed to re-stock the empty factory and resume business at Surat. It was not difficult to find a purchaser. John Vaux, the Company's Deputy-Governor at Bombay, and President Harris had quarrelled; the former threatened to quit the service and become an interloper. The present opportunity to put his threat into execution was a tempting one; Vaux purchased the *Elizabeth* and her cargo from the French, and abandoned his post. He soon had many to keep him in countenance, for interlopers abounded.

A little later in the war, another Company's ship, the *Berkeley Castle*, carrying goods and despatches, was sunk in the Channel by a French man-of-war; while, in 1694, the whole fleet from India fell captive to the enemy.

At Fort St. George, President Yale, from the moment of his succeeding, had quarrelled with his Council. Yet this quarrel and the general state of warfare in the country did not prevent Yale from getting peaceable possession of a new station, Tegnapatam, for the Company, by treaty with the Hindu Rajah. This town was duly walled, the ramparts were mounted with guns and it was given the title of Fort St. David. The new acquisition appears to have been viewed with much jealousy by the Dutch, who refused to pay the new owners the same Customs they had formerly paid the Rajah's representatives. Notwithstanding that the Company's factor explained that the sale of the place was legal and complete, the Dutch continued obstinate, and so an embargo was laid on all their commerce until they should

achieve a better frame of mind. Yale's temper finally led to his discharge, and in 1692 the Company resorted to the expedient of sending out a bluff, choleric officer, Captain (afterwards Sir) John Goldesborough, to be "commissary general and supervisor" over all their affairs in India. Goldesborough stirred things up with a mighty hand, but accomplished little besides general censure. This commodity he distributed impartially to great and small, but upon one in particular it fell, whose reputation is now as secure from such aspersions as fate then mercifully rendered his ears oblivious to them.

We left Job Charnock an unwilling prisoner in Fort St. George, miserable at the failure of his plans to establish a factory on the Ganges, a failure chiefly ascribable to the interference of the hot-headed Captain Heath. But at length the firman from the Mogul was followed by a promise of protection from a new Viceroy of Bengal. So, in the summer of 1690, Charnock and his little band of thirty European followers set out from Madras for the site they had chosen at the mouth of the Hugli river. It was a dismal prospect; the place was in a "deplorable condition, nothing being left for our present accommodation and a rain falling day and night". But although his fever-stricken men had threatened mutiny, Charnock was not dismayed. He worked hard—as Day had done at Madras and Aungier at Bombay—at establishing a worthy fort, and when all the buildings, save three wretched hovels, were burnt down, and he and the rest of the Company's servants compelled to brave the tropic sun and rain shelterless,

he began again. Slowly the village and then the town of Calcutta arose from the dreary mud-bank: and the merits of its site, with its deep harbour and complete immunity from native attack, began to be recognised by all. Traders, native banyans and Armenians, began to flock thither, and although at first, owing to malaria, death reaped a fearful harvest, yet when Charnock, exhausted from overwork and still calumniated, finally succumbed, 10th January, 1693, his dying eyes could detect some promise in his loyal handiwork. Out of that village was to grow the capital of British India.

Charnock's last days had been embittered by contumely and neglect: but luckily he was spared the insolent reproaches of the upstart, Sir John Goldesborough: for he died before that worthy's arrival at Madras. Goldesborough himself was not long in falling a prey to the climate of India which had removed Presidents, chief-agents and factors in rapid succession the past few years. One of Goldesborough's last acts was to make application to the native governor of Hugli to obstruct Captain Pitt, "a determined leader among the interlopers," who had arrived in the river in October, 1693, with a large vessel and a valuable cargo. The Governor promised to stop Pitt's sales and purchases, but Thomas Pitt was not to be baulked thus, although already secretly making up his mind to join his fortunes to the old Company.

On the arrival of Sir John Gayer at Bombay in May, 1694, he found the Company's government and trade in a miserable condition. The revenue had

sunk from 62,500 to 17,000 xeraphins: the garrison was weak, consisting of only about 100 English, Dutch and French soldiers, and the cocoanut plantations were nearly ruined. Nevertheless, Gayer resolved to continue Bombay as the capital and chief station of the Company's trade, and began to concert measures for a general extension of business and the summary repression of interlopers and pirates.

The death of the Persian Shah in 1694 caused a sudden check in the Company's trade, which more than neutralised other advantages they had recently enjoyed. In Persia all obligations entered into by the monarch terminate at his death, and a new firman was necessary from Husein, his successor. Hostile Arabs were patrolling and terrorising the Persian Gulf, and so preventing caravans from setting forth; but the chief loss suffered by the Company came from the treachery of the Armenian merchants to whom, as we have seen, the Company entrusted a vast quantity of English cloths for disposal in the native bazaars. Instead of acting up to the trust ingenuously reposed in them, the Armenians were shameful enough to continue their loyalty to the Turkey Company, with whom they had long had dealings, until that body could recover the recent loss it had sustained by the capture of its fleet. With smiling assurance they received the East India Company's goods; but, so far from attempting to sell, flung them into their cellars and abandoned them to dampness, worms and decay.

CHAPTER XV.

The Dowgate Adventurers Checkmated.

BRIBERY, on a large and profuse scale, is, under the most favourable circumstances, difficult, if not impossible, of concealment. Wives and valets will babble and, lo! the scandal will out. Child's systematic corruption during 1693 was effected with signal ability; Sir Thomas Cooke had been made the sole instrument: not even his fellow-directors professed to know for what purpose their cash was demanded, or into whose palm the guineas were to fall. Cooke had free access to the Company's funds: a blind confidence was reposed in him, and whatever sum he desired to draw he drew with impunity. "Sundry charges on account of the charter": that was the phrase which covered an expenditure of over £80,000.

The charter was duly procured, and after the affair of the *Redbridge* a lull fell upon the scene. The lull lasted two years, and then malicious rumours sped through the town and the storm broke. These rumours concerned not merely the East India Company alone, but the next wealthiest corporation in the realm as well—that of the City of London. A clamour against bribery and corruption deafened the ears of Parliament, the names of several in high places were mentioned, and a committee was appointed to

examine the books of both corporations. The examination of the City's accounts quickly yielded fruit: the Speaker of the House, Sir John Trevor, found to have received 1,000 guineas for expediting a local bill, was ignominiously expelled. But when the Committee proceeded to Leadenhall Street, they met with greater difficulty. Ransacking day-books and ledgers, cross-examining clerks and committee-men, they could only find that certain large sums had been expended on special service. Here was matter for suspicion, but there was nothing tangible. At length one entry was investigated: A certain Coltston had bargained with the Company for 200 tons of saltpetre. The record of such a transaction would not have been glanced at twice but for the fact that Coltston was known to be an agent of Sir Edward Seymour, Commissioner of the Treasury, who was already suspected of taking bribes. This caused the contract to be scrutinised closely, when it was revealed that the Company was selling the saltpetre for some £10,000 below market price. Yet the gift of this sum had been managed so adroitly that, although it was morally certain that Seymour had received the money, it could not be legally brought home to him and the great man escaped any other penalty than the ridicule and lampoons of the Whigs. But the Company's opponents, though baulked here, were not to let the secret of the £80,000—which Sir Thomas Cooke had expended for his master out of the Company's coffers—remain unprobed to the bottom. They badgered poor Cooke in his place in Parliament, and when he refused to answer,

consigned him to the Tower for contempt. More than this, they forced through the passage of a bill providing for such penalties, if he persisted in his silence, as would forever ruin him. He was to refund the £80,000 to the Company, pay £20,000 in fines to the Crown and be debarred from ever holding office. Cooke tearfully pleaded for mercy, but the Whig hounds, keen on the scent, were resolute, and it was only when he promised to divulge all if he were legally indemnified for the consequences of his revelations that the House withdrew its bill. Every engine of obstruction and repression was exerted in vain by the officials guilty of doing that which Francis Bacon had done. It was whispered that things might come out that every good Englishman would wish to hide, that the greater part of the enormous sums which had passed through Cooke's hands had been paid to Portland for His Majesty's use. But the Whigs were determined to know the truth, whoever might suffer by the disclosure.[1]

When the inquiry was held it came out that the Duke of Portland had indeed been offered a sum of £50,000, but he had sternly rejected it. Nottingham also, when offered £10,000, had refused to be corrupted, and other ministers had been equally firm. But a large sum, some £8,000, had, it appeared, been paid by Cooke to a certain Sir Basil Firebrace,[2] who had handed the bag of guineas over

[1] Macaulay, *History of England*, vol. ii.

[2] Child, when examined by Parliament, declared that there "was a kind of a Committee of twenty-five persons, that sat *de die in diem*,

to another personage named Bates, notorious as the creature of the Duke of Leeds. Bates sought to fly, but his flight was frustrated, and he was brought before the Committee of Inquiry, then sitting in the Exchequer Chamber. He reluctantly confessed that he had left the bag of gold at the Duke's town house. In vain the witness tried to explain that the Duke had refused to accept the bribe; that he had in fact returned the guineas. It soon transpired that this part of the witness's evidence was incontrovertible; the guineas had indeed been returned, but only on the very day when the present inquiry was set on foot! For six months they had thus lain in the Duke's ante-chamber—or so the committee was asked to believe. It was futile for Leeds to seek to explain away the suspicious circumstances of the case. He harangued the Lords with contemptuous denials and cynical anecdotes; he wearied the Commons with boasts of his integrity and allegations of plots: in neither House were his protests received with conviction. The flight to the Continent of the Swiss factotum who had received the money made the Duke's guilt all but certain, but it destroyed the link in the chain of legal evidence. Parliament was prorogued and the bill for impeachment was dropped. But although not formally impeached the Duke's public career was over, and, if he still kept office a short time longer, it was an office without power, without influence, and even without honour.

to destroy the Company; and he told Sir Thomas Cooke that he thought Sir Basil (Firebrace) the fittest person to divide them".—See *Parl. Hist.*, 7 William III. (1695).

Such an exposure of Oriental methods could hardly avoid lowering further the East India Company's prestige with a monarch of William's temper. He had given it the charter it sought, and the nation had tacitly acknowledged his right to grant such an instrument. But the Company, which after all had only done in the West what for a century it had been used to do in the East, could never again pin its faith wholly to the principle of the royal prerogative. William, as Dutch Stadtholder, held a line of conduct open nowhere to the reproaches of his English subjects. He showed no political or commercial favour to the Company's rivals, and if the Dutch in the East profited by His Majesty's accession to the throne of England, it was only by virtue of lies and false rumours. But, on the other hand, William was sovereign of three realms at home. He was King of Scotland, and in that capacity could issue a charter to a Scottish Company to trade to the Indies. The first tidings of such a project came to Leadenhall Street in the form of an Act of Incorporation passed by the Parliament of Scotland, on 26th June, 1695. The prime mover was William Paterson, to-day famous as the founder of the Bank of England. Paterson received support from numerous noblemen, gentry and merchants to the amount of £400,000.

This strongly suggested to the Company the necessity of having its charter and privileges confirmed by Act of Parliament. The fear of a new rival in this Scottish Company and of its interference in the East India trade was ostensibly strengthened

by the ample privileges with which the Parliament of Scotland had vested it, in all respects greater than the London Company had acquired in the successive letters patent which they had enjoyed for nearly a century.[1] The latter became apprehensive that this new corporation might afford new subterfuges to the interlopers, but whether this apprehension diminished as further particulars came to hand or not, the circumstance afforded a capital pretext for pressing Parliament for a confirmation of its own charter and trade. But neither Parliament nor the nation was in a humour to grant this request. Many in the Commons wished well to the Scotch in their project. The news that the Company's home-bound Indian fleet had been captured by the French in the Channel was received in some quarters with cheering. In 1697 the weavers, who declared that the Company's silks were ruining them, broke out into rioting; a mob of three thousand persons threatened Child's mansion, and, attacking the East India House, were only prevented from wholesale pillage by the efforts of the militia and the press-gang. Meanwhile, as was to be expected, the merchants in Dowgate, who had arrogated to themselves the title of the New Company—but which the old Company never spoke of but as the "Cabal of Interlopers"—opposed tooth and nail the petition.

Undiscouraged by its unpopularity, its recent heavy losses and its dull prospects, the Company

[1] Bruce's *Annals*, vol. iii.

—"with a true Roman courage"—met and boldly resolved to add £300,000 to its stock, and equipping more ships than ever hoped to bear their rivals down.

The Scottish Company soon succumbed through its own inherent weakness and by reason of foreign intrigues. But the Dowgate merchants continued to prosper, and it soon became necessary to make a great effort to destroy all likelihood of their receiving a charter from Parliament.

In the East the interlopers had not only obstructed the Company's trade at the ports of the native princes "by that imprudent conduct which might have been expected from speculators looking for immediate gain" unrestrained in India and unregulated at home. The result was costly investments of Indian produce and depressed sales at home, by which means the Company's credit was lowered in the eyes of the Mogul governors, rajahs, naiks and banians.

Nor was this all. When the interlopers were disappointed in the sales of their cargoes and in their purchases of Indian produce, not the sort of men were they to return to Europe empty-handed and profitless. Their method in such case was to make prizes of ships belonging to the native powers and leave the Company's servants and factories to suffer for their buccaneering misdeeds. It had always been hard to teach the natives to distinguish between authorised and unlicensed traders bearing the same flag; but since the trade had been flung open to all by Parliament, and the character and

numbers of the so-called interlopers raised, it was become impossible. Thus a general infamy settled down on the English character, to which the Dutch cheerfully contributed. At last, in September, 1695, the Company's whole trade in Western India was brought to a standstill, and their servants at Surat and Broach confronted by a fearful death from the rage and fury of the populace. An English pirate plundered a ship belonging to Abdul Gofar, one of the principal merchants of Surat. The Governor, who had hitherto behaved in a friendly manner, placed a guard on the Company's house to prevent its being plundered and the servants massacred by the infuriated populace, for a crime which they had not committed, but denied in vain. At this delicate juncture news came that a far graver offence had been wrought by the same hand. A pilgrim ship belonging to the Mogul had been plundered and the pilgrims robbed and maltreated. The first exploit was deeply resented, but the second was sacrilege in the eyes of the Mohammedans. The luckless President and all his companions were seized and put in irons to save them from being torn in pieces by the infuriated inhabitants.

Their sad plight, so far from evoking any commiseration from their Dutch rivals, spurred the latter to complete the Company's ruin. Insidiously did they heap fuel on the popular indignation, thinking thereby to extirpate the English. To the Mogul they made a handsome offer to clear the Indian seas of pirates and to assume all responsibility for the safe conveyance of all pilgrims to Jedda on condition that

a firman should be granted to them for an exclusive trade, free of Customs, at Surat and in the dominions of the Mogul.

By this bold stroke the Dutch overreached themselves; the Mogul Governor grew suspicious. This suspicion strengthened when, on the protestations of innocence by the imprisoned President, he desired that the French, Dutch and English ships should go at once in search of the offender; it was the English alone, through Sir John Gayer at Bombay, who were ready to comply. Gayer's promptitude, if it did not remedy, at least averted the danger with which Annesley and his friends were threatened. A response came from the Court of the Mogul, "that the English, French and Dutch should put to sea in search of the thieves, but the embargo on all trade must continue till the innocence or guilt of the English Company should be proved".

The Mogul's resentment continued unabated; Bombay, Madras and all the Company's Indian settlements were threatened with annihilation. All European ships were prohibited from displaying flags, or Europeans from carrying arms or using palanquins. It was to no avail that the French and Dutch complained: Aurangzeb was obdurate. Yet, from the greater quantity of their armed shipping and the fact that they combined their equipments, their condition was far less precarious than that of the English, who everywhere were sunk in despair.[1]

[1] Macaulay says, speaking of the depredations of the French privateers: "The losses of the unfortunate East India Company, already surrounded by difficulties and impoverished by boundless

Now, the author of all this trouble was the notorious pirate, Henry Avery. When the account of his depredations reached Leadenhall Street, the Company at once presented a memorial to the Government. King William was then in Flanders, but the Lords Justices offered a reward of £500, to which the Company added 4,000 rupees, an equivalent amount, for Avery's apprehension.[1] It was soon

prodigality in corruption, were enormous. Five large ships returning from the Eastern seas, with cargoes of which the value was popularly estimated at a million, fell into the hands of the enemy."

[1] From the Court to "Our Generall and Councill of India," dated 17th July, 1696:—

"Upon the advice you gave us in your letter of the 28th May, 1695, which we received by an Overland Conveyance the 10th of Aprill last that one Every a Pyratt, being at Johanna in a Ship called the ffancy, formerly the Charles, carrying 46 guns and 130 men and the liklyhood there was of her Sailing into the Red Sea, and after ransacking the Gulph proceed(ing) to Persia and do(ing) all the Mischief he can there, which you fear may procure infinite clamours at Surrat and be followed with an embargo from the Government of all we have there, we thereupon made an Address to their Excellencies the Lords Justices of England that have the present Administration of the Government during the King's absence in fflanders, who have been pleased to issue out a Proclamation in his Majesty's name for apprehending the said Every and his Ship, promising a reward of £500. . . . You will therefore receive of the said Proclamation by this Ship which we would have published with all due solemnity in all our ffactoryes. . . ."

Again, to the same, 7th August, 1696:—

"We understand by a youth that is lately come to London who went out in the Charles alias ffancy That Everyes Company consisted of 52 ffrench, 14 Danes, the rest English Scotch and Irish, had pillaged severall Danish ships on the Coast of Guiney, some English Ships on the Isle of May, besides their Robberies and villainous Practices on the Gonsway and other Ships in the Red Sea belonging to the Subjects of the Great Mogul, which we cannot think of without astonishment and Detestation being highly sensible of the sad circumstances our President and Councill and ffactors at Surratt are

found that his ship, the *Fancy*, fitted out in the West Indies, with a crew of all nations, had sailed with its plunder to the Bahamas. Here the ship was sold and the crew scattered, but although a number had since been seized and executed in England, the arch-pirate Avery escaped.

Besides Avery, the redoubtable Captain Kidd had been busy in Eastern waters. Besides other adventures he plundered a Bombay vessel of Rajahpur; subsequently, after careening at the Laccadive Islands, he went to Calicut, where he took a vessel and again escaped on the appearance of the Company's ships. At Cochin he took three valuable Dutch prizes and then retired to Madagascar, where the pirates had established fortified stations, supplied by stores sent from New York to the Indies. Even at that early day New York figures prominently as the baiting-place of Anglo-Oriental pirates and interlopers.

One of Avery's letters of friendly warning, addressed to one of the Company's commanders, has been preserved. It runs in this wise:—

under on this occasion and the evill consequences that may happen to our affairs there. . . .

"We observe the Prudent Methods you have used in writing to Court, as also to the Governour and chief Umbraws, and the cogent arguments herein used for indicating the Innocency of the English Nation from any such barbarous actions, in order to the regaining the Liberty of our Presidents and Servants at Surratt. . . .

"The Ship ffancy's Company had been at the Isle of Providence where they had left this Ship and took passage for Europe in severall sloops, Two of them are lately come to Ireland, where they are seized, and one other of the villains is taken at Rochester and will no doubt be speedily brought to Justice. . . ."

February ye 28th 1695

"To all English Commanders lett this Sattisffye that I was Riding here att this Instant in ye: Ship fancy man of Warr formerly the Charles of ye Spanish Expedition who departed from Croniac ye 7th of May: 94: Being and am Now in A Ship of 46: guns 150: men and bound to seek our fortunes. I have never as yett wronged any English or Dutch nor never I intend whilst I am Commander wherefore As I commonly Speake w[th] all ships I desire who ever comes to ye: perusal of this to take this signall that if you or any whome you may inform are desirous to know w[t] wee are att a Distance then make your Antient up in a Ball or Bundle and hoyst him at ye Mizon peek ye Mizon Being furled I shall answere w[th] ye Same: and never mollest you: for my men are hungry Stout and Resolute: and should they exceed my Desire I cannott help my Selfe as yett: An Englishman's friend.

"HENRY EVERY."

But the "Englishman's friend" was at length forced to flee from justice and perish miserably, though not on the gallows, like his compeer Kidd.

Owing to the wars in Europe and the scarcity of soldiers, together with its own weakened position, the Company could do little to strengthen Bombay or the position of its servants in India. It was plain that until the interloping system could be completely abolished the trade of all Europeans would continue subject to obstruction, and the odium for their misdeeds rest with the Company. At Surat, Annesley

and his Council remained in confinement until the close of June, 1696, when an order arrived for their release and the restoration of the Company's property at Surat and the subordinate factories. But this scarcely bettered their condition, for fresh pirate outrages on the part of their countrymen again exposed them to restraint. As if there were not already sufficient pirates in the Eastern seas the Company's servants themselves now began to add to their number. Weary of routine and tempted by the gains of Avery and Kidd, the crews of the *Mocha* and the *Josiah* mutinied on the way to China, murdered their officers and turned buccaneers. Other crews threatened to follow their example, until Sir John Gayer was afraid to clear his ships from Bombay; the mutinous spirit spread to the garrison, and as it had been questioned whether the Company's charter enabled them to exercise martial law, except during actual hostilities, the perils of the situation were increased.

What was true of the state of trade in the West of India during these trying years was almost equally true of the East. In addition to the piracies which occasionally brought trade to a complete standstill, the flames of war were being kindled in all directions. Aurangzeb's empire was threatened with armies eager for dominion and spoils. The Sultan Akbar had invaded India, supported by Persian auxiliaries, and a general upheaval of the whole peninsula was imminent. In Bengal a rebellious Rajah arose and defied the Mogul Government. Nevertheless, although trade languished from these

causes, the efforts of the Company and its servants to make the best of an ill situation did not relax.

We have already seen the great interloper, Thomas Pitt, in former days flouting the authority of Fort St. George. Now he had turned over a new leaf and become a Company's man, and was sent out as Governor of that very station and of its dependencies. Moreover, he was to act independently of the orders of the Governor-General, Sir John Gayer, from whose jurisdiction this part of India was detached. This measure was designed to terminate the dissensions among the Council at Madras, which, in addition to the other afflictions, had embarrassed the Company's affairs. Much as the Company at home would have desired to have its whole trade in India placed on a single basis, regulated by a single administration and authorised by one imperial firman, yet it was obliged, owing to the present political anarchy of the country, to postpone measures looking to this end until India was more tranquil. Aurangzeb, then in extreme old age, could not be expected to survive much longer, and, even at his death, nothing could be done till it was seen which of the several pretenders would succeed in firmly establishing himself on the throne. Meanwhile, the Company's policy was: "Keep fair with all parties and assist none without real necessity, and at all events do not engage further than you can retreat, if questioned for it".[1]

Thomas Pitt was told to use every means to

[1] Letter to Bombay, 10th March, 1698.

repress interlopers and to discover what secret connection any of them had with the pirates or with the Company's servants. The strictest discipline was to be observed on board the Company's ships to prevent the crews rising against their officers. These precautions seemed the more necessary just then, for intelligence had just reached London that the officers of the African Company's ship *Hannibal*, mounting thirty guns, had been murdered by her crew, who had forthwith turned her into a pirate for a cruise of the Indian Ocean. Here it seemed not unlikely they might fall in with one or other of the Company's ships, two bound for Madras with eighty chests of treasure, and two with one hundred and ten chests for the Bengal trade.

The fear of pirates—a fear only too well founded—appears in all the correspondence between the Company and its servants. Kidd and Avery's imitators revelled in infamy: they and their compeers and imitators swarmed throughout the Eastern seas, making weekly hauls of rich booty, chiefly from native craft. Under such circumstances the Company's trade grew more and more difficult. Imprisoned for the offences committed by these conscienceless freebooters, its servants were unable to make purchases of many articles, indigo in particular, which had risen in price owing to large investments by the Dutch, the finer spices from the Moluccas, pepper from Java, copper, tutenague and tin, all of which articles besides were being sold at high rates in Persia and at Mocha, where silks and coffee were given in exchange.

From this prospect we turn our gaze to London, where a crowning blow, a greater than any they had yet suffered, was in store for the Company. We have seen, for several seasons past, the anxiety of the directors to obtain a confirmation of its charter and privileges from Parliament. In the letter to Bombay, 4th May, 1696, they had informed Sir John Gayer that they "were almost confident that the Company would have been established this session by Act of Parliament—the Court, Lords and Commons seem to be as forward for such an establishment as ourselves, and the more by reason of the Scotch Act of Parliament for an East India Company—but towards the end of the session the Parliament, resolving to raise £2,500,000 towards the carrying on the present war, by a Land Bank as it is called, and was first meant, by most that promised it; but on deeper and further consideration it was found that so much money could not be raised upon land until it was first advanced by the loans of particular men: and the next thoughts, as we conceive and is very natural for any man to think, who knows anything of England and the City of London, was that if the East India Company were now settled by Act of Parliament, with addition of a great sum of money from the old and new adventurers, this must needs obstruct the raising of the Land Banks at this time, to the disappointment of Government. And this we take to be the single cause of deferring the settlement of the East India trade until next winter, when we have great reason to believe it will be done effectually, the whole nation

being in effect satisfied, that Interloping is unnational, and indeed shameful in the judgment of all unbiased men, of all nations, that know anything of India. This being the case, you and we must suffer one year longer the molestation of such irregular people as the interlopers."

The Government had indeed harboured such a project, but it was not to redound to the advantage of the East India Company alone. Dowgate and its friends shrewdly perceived in the scheme mighty possibilities for themselves. Yet even at this time was it generally recognised that "two companies of the same nation and with the same privileges were political contradictions, if not absurdities, as their opposition to each other must ruin the credit of both".

In 1698 the funds required to wind up the expenses of the French war, which had terminated by the Treaty of Ryswick, taxed the resources of the Treasury and the ingenuity of the Government. The Land Bank Scheme, by means of which £2,500,000 was to be raised for the public service, was found impracticable. The Bank of England had only just been established, and was not yet prepared to advance so large a sum. At such juncture the Company came boldly forward. It offered to advance £700,000 at 4 per cent., provided its charter should be conferred by Act of Parliament, and the entire Indian trade legally settled upon it. This move the Dowgate India merchants—"interlopers" the Company still called them—promptly discounted. They had recently renewed their application to

Parliament for an act creating a new East India Company. They based their application on the popular prejudice against monopolies and other reasons veiling the discontent of many of the new proprietors of the Company's stock [1] whose dividends had lately been retarded by reason of the heavy loss of ships and cargoes during the war. They now proposed to Parliament, provided they might have the exclusive trade to India without the obligation to trade on a joint stock (unless a charter was afterwards conferred on them, as a corporation), to lend the Government £2,000,000 at 8 per cent. interest.[2] The Treasury, sadly in need of money, jumped at the proposal, and in June, 1698, Parliament passed a bill to establish a new East India Company.

A panic seized Leadenhall Street; the Company prayed to be heard. It pleaded that it had fulfilled all the conditions in its successive charters, that it possessed a full right to its settlements, to which, by law, it possessed an exclusive title. Besides, it enjoyed commercial privileges in these settlements which it had purchased, and which were worth £44,000 per annum; how was Parliament to get rid of this fact? Finally it also offered £2,000,000 to the Treasury. But the offer came too late; and, in spite of the protest of twenty-one peers, the Bill passed both Houses. The sub-

[1] By the new subscription, in 1695, of £700,000, no fewer than 781 members had been added to the Company.

[2] Messrs. Cawston and Keane, while stating this fact, suggest that it is a misprint by Anderson for 3 per cent. Of course, it is not so. See *The Early Chartered Companies*.

scribers of the £2,000,000 were provisionally denominated the General Society trading to the East Indies, and the King was empowered to incorporate them by charter into one body politic. Each subscriber was to trade annually to the amount of his subscription, and the old, or London East India Company, to be permitted to trade to India until the 29th September, 1701.

Thus was the India trade knocked down to the highest bidder, and the Dowgate merchants, who for some years had aspired to the title of the New East India Company, at length realised their ambition. The act received the Royal assent, 5th July, 1698, and nine days later the subscription books were opened at Mercers' Hall. For forty-eight hours the money poured in; the King himself contributed £10,000, the Treasury Lords £5,000 apiece. But, as we shall see, by far the greatest single amount came neither from King, courtier, interloper or foreigner.

On the evening of the fourteenth over £600,000 was subscribed; on the sixteenth the £2,000,000 was promised and the books closed. When the King's Commissioners scrutinised the pages (which, in excellent preservation, may still be seen at the India Office), they noted the most singular and significant entry of all: "I, John Du Bois, doe subscribe for £315,000". Who was this John Du Bois? None other than the treasurer of the Old Company. By this financial master-stroke of Child's, the Old Company became the leading proprietor in the new body. On 5th September of the same year,

William issued a charter establishing "the English Company trading to the East Indies".

The blow having fallen, the Old Company began to minimise its consequences. It foresaw that the path of the Dowgate merchants would be paved with obstacles. Its letters to its servants in the East breathe a most sanguine spirit. It informed them that although it had hesitated formerly to have a large stock in India to make purchases, yet now there was no longer any obstacle to a forward commercial policy in India.

"To the cynical mind," says Mr. Roberts in his concluding chapter to Hunter's *British India*, "it might seem as though Parliament had but paralysed the Old Company with a grievous wound and brought into the world another that was crippled from its birth."

Time soon showed that the New Company had indeed an uphill road to travel. To begin with, it required £600,000 a year to transact a business the size of the Old Company's. The New Company's capital of £1,662,000 only produced £132,960 per annum. More money was inevitably demanded, but when more money was asked for it was not forthcoming, or only forthcoming with pain. The subscribers had already for the most part advanced all they possessed and were ill prepared to sustain for years a losing business. Shares in the New Company took a sudden and alarming drop; the public felt it had been duped by speculation; there began to be open hints of amalgamation. The Old Company's shares, which likewise had fallen,

now advanced. Moreover, at this juncture the Old Company resolved, as its sales had this year already produced £640,000, and the spring sales would probably amount to £300,000 more, to make a call on the proprietors of 25 per cent., thereby raising some £400,000, and so "discharge all their bonds and debts and refute the aspersions of their opponents who had represented their affairs to be desperate".

Indeed, the affairs of the Old Company were far from being desperate. "Our joints are too stiff to yield to our juniors." "We are," it wrote, "a little better stocked with experience, having surmounted a great many difficulties and losses in late and former times." It was ready to admit that amalgamation might come—"it is probable we may both be weary of fighting and giving to the world occasion to laugh at our folly and may then shake hands and be friends". But this would not be, it added with a touch of malice, until "they have smarted as much as they have made us for several years past".

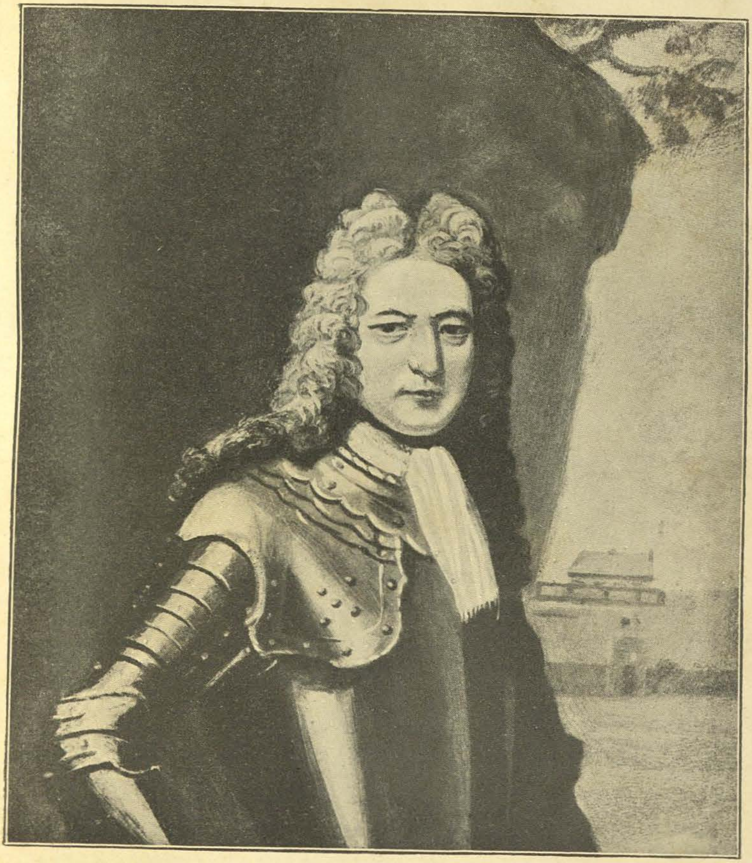
In March, 1699, Sir Josiah Child lay on his death-bed, having, like his brother—*par nobile fratrum*—given the Company the benefit of his intelligence, his experience and his influence to the last. It was then that his old rival, Thomas Papillon, was employed by the New Company to negotiate a coalition. But he was informed that this was impossible unless the New Company had ready money at its command "to pay for forts, territories, etc., in India and to lay down the same sum to begin a new joint stock as the London Company were in a capacity to do".

The "fine Roman courage" of which the Company boasted was during the following year, when the British public stood astonished at their not giving up the ghost, much in evidence. "We have showed our faces to fortune formerly when all the world stood aghast at our losses and expected we should have given up our ghost, yet then we called in fresh money and went on with a resolution unknown to any other than this Company." "Take pattern from us and show all around you that such blustering storms are so far from tearing us up that it only a little shakes the roots and makes them thereby take the better hold, and we grow the finer and flourish the faster." [1]

Baulked in their ardent desire for coalition, the merchants of Dowgate began to take measures to solicit the trade of the East. In its internal administration the New Company very strongly resembled the Old, not surprising since several of the directors were old servants of the Old Company, such as Heathcote and Streynsham Master, and these were expected to employ their local knowledge as well as the fortunes they had accumulated in the Old Company's services to injure the latter's trade.

Their charter providing for the appointment of Royal ambassadors, in 1699 William Norris, a member of Parliament, was despatched with the King's sanction to the Court of the aged Aurangzeb to explain the new situation and procure his favour.

[1] Letter to Persia, 2nd August, 1699.



SIR STREYNSHAM MASTER,

GOVERNOR OF FORT ST. GEORGE (1677-81).

Norris, to increase his dignity, was created a baronet by the King, and promised a salary of £2,000. His brother, Dr. Edward Norris, was appointed his secretary; he was accompanied by a chaplain, a surgeon, seven musicians and a number of personal followers, carrying with them trunkfuls of gorgeous apparel, liveries of scarlet and gold, with which to impress the barbarians. To no purpose did Sir Josiah Child warn those who lent themselves to this business that an embassy from a Christian King to the Mogul potentate was futile, because an alliance "by reason of distance and barbarity" was impossible. The New Company pinned its faith to this project, and Norris set out for India.

The Old Company instantly took alarm and appointed Dr. Charles Davenant, also a member of Parliament, to oversee Norris in India. Meanwhile Gayer had been instructed to solicit a firman from the Mogul, "regardless of expense;" but considering that Aurangzeb's four sons, rival claimants to the throne, were now in the field, it was probable that the value of any firman would be far less than its cost.

Besides Norris's official rank, each of the Presidents of the New Company took the title of King's Consul, and so claimed precedence over the Old Company's servants. The first of these consuls, Sir Edward Littleton, had a pleasant foretaste of service under his new masters before his little fleet left England. He was appointed President in Bengal, to sail late in January, 1699. Circumstances induced him to postpone sailing for a day or two; the directors

in Dowgate heard of the delay, and to show that they brooked no disobedience, dismissed him from the service and appointed one Richard Trenchfield instead. The order of dismissal was only a few hours on the way when it was revoked by the intercession of other directors and shareholders, and Sir Edward's appointment confirmed.[1]

The first equipment of the New Company comprised three ships, with a total value in merchandise of £178,000. Besides Littleton, a troublesome interloper, John Pitt, closely related to the great Thomas of that name, now Governor of Fort St. George, was appointed to the Coromandel Coast, and Sir Nicholas Waite (knighted on this occasion), formerly in the Company's service at Bantam and dismissed, was appointed President at Surat.

The New Company appear to have expected great things of Norris as King's ambassador. The Old Company could have told them something about King's ambassadors. Waite was authorised to advance £20,000 for the expense of the embassy, and his Excellency did not depart unprovided with choice gifts for the Mogul. Among the latter it being desired to include a small train of brass artillery, the New Company petitioned the King that it might be supplied by the Board of Ordnance with this article. To which the Board replied "that they did not know how far it might be justifiable to furnish foreigners with a train of artillery, which possibly at

[1] *Letter-book*, 2nd and 7th Feb., 1699.

one time or another may be made use of against his Majesty's subjects ."[1]

In February the Old Company had cheerfully petitioned Parliament that although its charter then lapsed and its exclusive rights of trade expired, it should be continued as a corporation after the fateful Michaelmas Day, 1701. It wished not only to avail itself of the privileges it still enjoyed, but to go on trading as a body on that portion of the New Company's stock for which its members had subscribed in the name of the treasurer, John Du Bois. It still hoped to convince the nation that it would receive greater advantage through an old-established organisation than from a new, timid and inexperienced one, such as the New Company. Though this petition was disallowed by Parliament, the Old Company could afford to wait in confidence. The New Company, lately lauded so vigorously, continued to find its stock depressed and public opinion of its credit beginning to waver. It bent all its energies towards effecting a favourable coalition. Frequent meetings were held between representatives both of Leadenhall Street and Dowgate. The New Company suggested that the Old should increase its subscription of its stock up to £1,000,000.

The Old Company would not hear of the proposition. Other overtures were made which, daily feeling greater confidence in its resources, it rejected in like fashion.

It was at this time that the town was diverted

[1] *East India Papers* in State Paper Office.

by the appearance of a quarto volume of verse, entitled *An Elegy on the Death of the Old East India Company.*

This was the state in which the Wretch was left,
Of all things but the signs of life bereft,
Stripp'd and divested on the ground she laid,
Lost to her hope and to the Name of Trade.

This elegy was intended as a piece of prophecy: "the wish was father to the thought": as we see in the preface, wherein the confession is made by the poet: "But though the Old Company has got the advantage of the New in having the citizens make choice of their members, yet the New has outwitted the Old in prevailing for the greatest majority. And the Leadenhall Society would give the world occasion to think more favourably of their intellects, if instead of cavilling against 'em they would enter into a joint stock with 'em and prefer an amicable agreement."[1]

The poet appears to found the highest hopes on the embassy of Norris, which great man was to undo all the evil wrought by the wicked Old Company in India, and inspire the natives with affection and mercantile probity. In his vision he foretells the Mogul's reception of Sir Edward :—

How the fam'd Prince, whose pow'rful sceptre sways
Where'er the Eastern sun extends its rays,
Shall rise with joy and run to his embrace,
Reading his master's honours in his face,
As he with fresh endearments treats his guest,

[1] *An Elegy on the Death of the Old East India Company, who died of a Wound received from a Patent: value, two millions.* 1699.

And makes the grant precede the just request,
Preventing what he'll ask by what he'll give.
His task too great if only to receive.
Indians and English both alike shall share
The monarch's favour and employ his care.
And Britain's wise ambassador obtain
Not only leave to trade, but almost reign.
Commerce shall spread itself along the coast,
And *Norris* shall regain what *Child* had lost.[1]

The Old Company, when Parliament refused its first petition, presented another in the following January. This time Sir Thomas Cooke, the Governor, and the other "Committees" who chanced to be members of Parliament, were granted leave to bring in a bill for the purpose. On 23rd February, 1700, it was read a third time and passed the House of Lords. According to ancient practice of that time, the Company, anxious to defer to the King even though such deference seemed in the growing power of Parliament supererogatory, prayed permission to attend His Majesty at Kensington Palace humbly to request the Royal assent. The required permission was given, and at noon on the last day of February the triumphant Sir Thomas Cooke, with "my Lord

[1] Elsewhere the author characterises Governor Cooke (?) as

An old grey fox, as sinful as precise,
Proud in his heart yet popular and low,
The City's friend because the Courtier's foe.
Two monarchs had the audacious Wretch opposed,
And feign'd religion, and with faction closed,
Prepar'd and ready with seditious herd
To cast his jealous murmurs at a third.
Could envy fasten and could malice feign
To blemish in a mind which knew no stain.—*Ibid.*

Mayor, ten or twelve of the Aldermen, the Sheriff and about 100 men of the Adventurers, in about sixty of their coaches" set off in high glee from the East India House to the substantial brick mansion which His Majesty had purchased from Lord Cottingham and destined to be famous as Kensington Palace. William received them courteously, but while assuring them of his favour and protection, took occasion briefly to recommend a union of the two Companies, as "it would be most for the interest of the India trade". The merchant adventurers retired to consider the King's wishes. At length on 13th March told His Majesty that while they continued uncertain about his sanction to the bill they "could have no security for their estates or debts, either in India or Europe, and knew not how to make or receive proposals"; but that they would do their best to effect coalition. William, ever a business-like monarch, recognised the reasonable nature of this attitude. A month later the Royal assent was given to a bill continuing the Old Company in its pursuit, but not its monopoly, of the Eastern trade.

END OF VOL. I.

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